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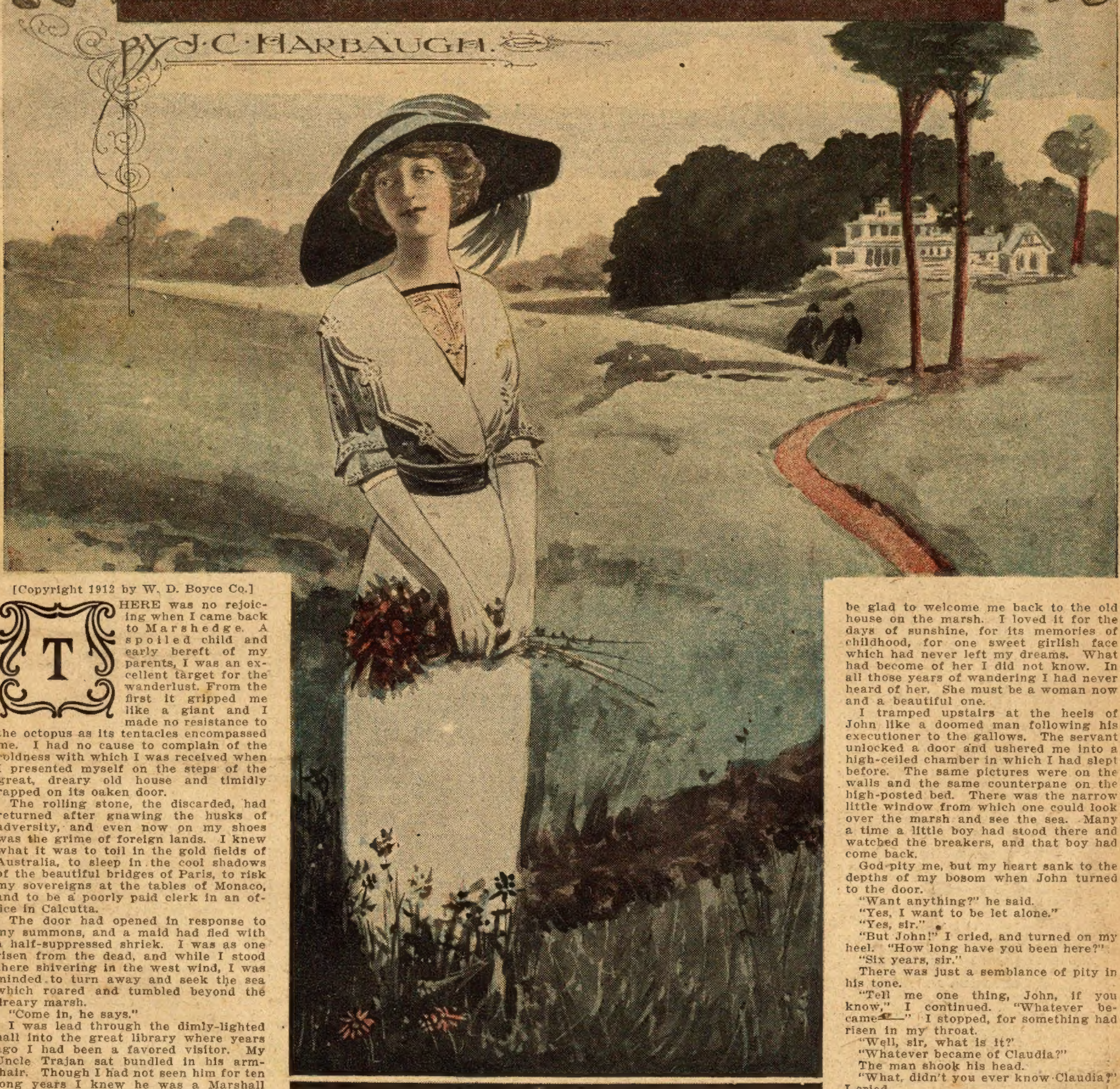
A SWEETHEART'S SECRET

Or, THE HOUSE ON THE MARSH

BY J. C. HARBAUGH.



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THERE was no rejoicing when I came back to Marshedge. A spoiled child and early bereft of my parents, I was an excellent target for the wanderlust. From the first it gripped me like a giant and I made no resistance to the octopus as its tentacles encompassed me. I had no cause to complain of the coldness with which I was received when I presented myself on the steps of the great, dreary old house and timidly rapped on its oaken door.

The rolling stone, the discarded, had returned after gnawing the husks of adversity, and even now on my shoes was the grime of foreign lands. I knew what it was to toil in the gold fields of Australia, to sleep in the cool shadows of the beautiful bridges of Paris, to risk my sovereigns at the tables of Monaco, and to be a poorly paid clerk in an office in Calcutta.

The door had opened in response to my summons, and a maid had fled with a half-suppressed shriek. I was as one risen from the dead, and while I stood there shivering in the west wind, I was minded to turn away and seek the sea which roared and tumbled beyond the dreary marsh.

"Come in, he says."

I was lead through the dimly-lighted hall into the great library where years ago I had been a favored visitor. My Uncle Trajan sat bundled in his armchair. Though I had not seen him for ten long years I knew he was a Marshall still.

He rested a gouty foot on a divan before him. His face was as white as the snow I had seen in the Apennines. His gray eyes looked me over from head to foot as if to say, "What manner of wretch is this?" I knew that he knew me on sight, for I possessed my father's, his brother's, features.

Even then I thought of rushing from the house and going back to the merciless world and the night.

"Uncle——"

The lifting of his hand broke my sentence.

"I know!" said he, and his tones pierced my soul like Parthian arrows. "I did not send for you. God knows what brought you back."

My blood seethed through my veins. I could have leaped upon him and strangled him in his chair. I had expected to find a man; I had found an icicle. I could scarcely control myself.

He reached out his hand and touched a call-bell. A man-servant appeared.

"Take this man to the room in the east wing, John," said he. "Give him food and drink if he needs it. God knows what mad fate brings him back; I don't."

And this was my reception. I had come to my own and my own received me not. I had dreamed in foreign lands that at least one hand would some day be glad to welcome me back to the old house on the marsh. I loved it for the days of sunshine, for its memories of childhood, for one sweet girlish face which had never left my dreams. What had become of her I did not know. In all those years of wandering I had never heard of her. She must be a woman now and a beautiful one.

I tramped upstairs at the heels of John like a doomed man following his executioner to the gallows. The servant unlocked a door and ushered me into a high-ceiled chamber in which I had slept before. The same pictures were on the walls and the same counterpane on the high-posted bed. There was the narrow little window from which one could look over the marsh and see the sea. Many a time a little boy had stood there and watched the breakers, and that boy had come back.

God pity me, but my heart sank to the depths of my bosom when John turned to the door.

"Want anything?" he said.

"Yes, I want to be let alone."

"Yes, sir."

"But John!" I cried, and turned on my heel. "How long have you been here?"

"Six years, sir."

There was just a semblance of pity in his tone.

"Tell me one thing, John, if you know," I continued. "Whatever became——" I stopped, for something had risen in my throat.

"Well, sir, what is it?'

"Whatever became of Claudia?"

The man shook his head.

"What, didn't you ever know Claudia?" I cried.

"Don't!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Marshall has forbidden the mention of that name in this house."

"The——"

I checked myself and fought down my ire.

"We won't mention the name, John. But you know?"

"I don't. She went away the year I came."

"Of her own will?"

"No, the master told her to go."

I gripped the back of a chair to steady my nerves, but it was almost a failure.

"I can't remain here longer," said the man. "You must pardon me, sir," and with this he went away, closing the door softly behind him.

I was alone. In a short time I went over to the little window and pulled aside the curtains. The moon was full in the vaulted sky. I essayed to raise the heavy sash, and in another moment was looking across the marsh at the billows. They were tipped with silver and were heaving in the grasp of the wind. The water lilies that rested on the bosom of the marsh waters nodded to one another and seemed to mock my situation. I had waded into the tide and plucked them for Claudia, and now she was somewhere, a discarded person like myself.

I stood at the window until I heard the great clock in the lower hall strike ten. As the tones died away a footstep came to the door. It opened and John appeared. He bore a tray in his hand and set it on the table without a word.

"I didn't ask for this, John," said I.

"No, but I thought——"

"Heaven bless you, John——"

He shrugged his shoulders, placed a finger on his lips, and was gone. I was half-famished, but had been too proud to ask for food after my reception. There was a bottle of wine on the salver, and I drained it before I stopped. It sent warmth to every part of my body. My uncle's cellars had long been famed for their vintage.

"I'll go back tomorrow," I thought. "The world is wide, and I can roam somewhere. It owes every man a living, and sooner than become a burden on those who want me not, I'll go away and die under a foreign sky. Curses on Trajan Marshall! If I could find Claudia! But why seek the impossible. One night in the old bed, and then back to the trails of other lands."

The wind came up with more fervor and roared against the window. Beyond the marsh I could hear the mystic voice of the sea. I turned from my repast and went over to the window. A road ran between the marsh and the house. It skirted the former and lost itself to the left. Not far in that direction was a hunting lodge where I had sat and watched the wild hares and the timid deer.

Presently there rose out of the murk a moving light. It resembled a foxfire, but I soon perceived that it was a lantern carried by some one. The sight strangely fascinated me. Lest I should be seen, I stepped back and gazed with bated breath.

Very soon the lantern rays revealed the bearer. While I looked the light stopped directly beneath the window. I saw that the one at whom I was staring was a woman with a shawl over her head. She as entirely alone. I was confident that she did not see me. The light revealed her face so well that I leaned forward and stared with more curiosity than ever.

"My God, Claudia!" I cried.

There was no mistaking the woman beneath me. In all the world there was no other face like that one. I had kept it in my heart for years. I had photographed it on my brain with the camera of love. It was well she did not hear me. At length she moved on and disappeared among the dense shadows that enveloped the house. Had she entered?

The long hours passed. The old clock struck twelve, midnight, and I was waiting for that light to go back over the marsh road. The moon sank into the sea, and the winds, tired of battling, sought the caverns of silence. I looked at the couch and resolved to retire.

Where had Claudia come from and whither had she gone? Banished from the house by the old man in the armchair, why had she come back? Was it for vengeance?

How long I slumbered I do not know, but I was startled by a tumult somewhere. I sat up in bed and looked wildly around. The chamber was almost dark.

"Help! Help!"

It was a woman's voice.

I was in the middle of the room in an instant. There were footsteps on the stair.

"Mr. Roland? Mr. Roland?"

A bound took me to the door and my hand shot back the bolt. There stood John as white as a winding sheet. His teeth were chattering with grim horror.

"What is it, John?"

He got his voice at last.

"The master!" he cried. "He's been murdered in his library!"

And that moment I thought of Claudia.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRINGE OF A WEB.

John's wild exclamation was like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, yet why should it be so? Surely a man like my Uncle Trajan would have enemies. A man who failed to welcome back the only child of his favorite brother could not be expected to have many friends. Obviously his heart was set against the world and the world would naturally be against him. I had already come to class him as an Ishmaelite, and my last thoughts of him ere I fell asleep were not happy ones.

I looked at John whose face was ashen and he returned my stare like a man just startled from a horrible dream.

Murdered! I went down the stair and opened the door of the library. The light was burning low, but it was bright enough to show me the figure that lay on the carpet at the foot of the armchair, silent and almost rigid. John came to the door and looked in still white and ghastly. I bent over the body, but did not touch it. It was my uncle sure enough.

What had become of the other servants I did not know. Perhaps they were cowering in other parts of the house, overwhelmed and awed into silence by the shock of the tragedy.

When I rose I turned to John.

"When did this happen?" I inquired.

He shook his head.

"When did you find him thus?"

"Ten minutes ago."

"Were you the first to discover him?"

"No, Nora found him."

"Who is Nora?"

"The Welsh girl we have had with us for four years."

"Reliable?"

"Reliable in every way." John's tones were complimentary.

"Why don't you come in?" I said. "The dead cannot harm you."

"But the horror of it!" replied the man, with a perceptible shudder. "It is terrible."

"Of course it is." John sidled into the room, but turned his face from the object on the floor.

"We must notify the authorities in Addison, but there is no particular haste about that. Did you hear any noise tonight?"

"You mean last night, sir; it's morning now."

"You are right, John." The light of the new day was streaming into the room, dissipating the gleam of the lamp.

"I did not hear anything last night," John proceeded. "But I sleep soundly. Nora came in quite late from a party over the hills, and, seeing a light in the library, a strange thing at that hour, she investigated. You see what she found, sir."

All this time I was thinking about Claudia. I could not get rid of the lantern on the road that skirted the marsh nor of the form it had revealed. There was no mistake. Though I had not seen my youthful companion for years, she was Claudia right enough. What was she doing there at that hour and from whence had she come? I wanted to question John about the girl, but I hesitated.

"Had my uncle any enemies?" I suddenly asked, as the servant twisted uneasily in the chair.

"He didn't have many friends and that's a fact," was the reply. "But I don't think his enemies would do a thing like this."

"It's done, John, and that's all there is of it. Where are the others?"

"They must be upstairs. Shall I call them, Mr. Roland?"

"Yes, but let them come into the room on the other side of the hall. They would not like to come in here."

"That's a fact, sir. You know how women are."

With this John went away glad to get out of the grim presence of death, and I was alone in the library with the dead. There came to me at that hour a revulsion of feeling regarding my uncle. Perhaps, after all, he was more sinned against than sinning. My aunt, who was something of a termagant during her married life, had led him a merry pace. The pair had not been well mated. I remembered some little tiffs I had witnessed, and I had wondered, though a youth, why Trajan Marshall had ever married Octavia Blair. She seemed to sour his existence, to rob him of many happy hours, and I doubted not that ere she died he had grown misanthropic and grouchy.

Presently I heard voices on the stair, and quitting the room of the crime, I crossed the hall and waited for the servants in the opposite chamber. They trooped in with white faces, three female servants, and started when they caught sight of me. I singled out one as Nora, for she was the most prepossessing, and directed my inquiries to her. She hadn't much to tell, but at the end of her story she dropped a word that sent a tingle through every fiber of my being.

"I saw nothing," said she, "but a moving light at the end of the garden just before I entered the house."

"Who carried it?"

"I could not see distinctly. There were some bushes between me and it. I don't think it was a Jack-o-lantern, for they rarely come up this far from the marsh. You see them nights among the reeds at the edge of the water."

I dropped that subject, for it was not a pleasant one.

"Where were you last night?" I asked, turning suddenly to one of the others, a woman older than Nora and with a hatchet-like face which I did not like.

"In bed, sir."

"And saw nor heard nothing?"

"I saw nothing, but I heard a noise."

"Where was it?"

"On this floor, I fancied. I thought Mr. Marshall was giving orders to John there."

"He gave me none last night," John hastened to say.

The third woman was a young girl of seventeen named Phipps, a comely lass with a wealth of Titian hair which was much disheveled.

"And you?" said I, addressing her.

"I sleep in the west wing," she answered, eager to tell her story. "I don't know how it was, but I couldn't sleep last night, and so I set to reading 'Love Me Little, Love Me Long' by Mr. Reade. It's a beautiful book."

"We'll discuss the book later on," I said, disgusted at the maid's garrulity. "What did you see or hear?"

"I got sleepy at the end of the ninth chapter and went to the window. While there I heard the clock in the hall strike eleven. I raised the sash to get a breath of fresh air and to look at the sea, as is my custom before I retire. I saw the light, too. It may have been the one Nora saw."

"Well?"

"It was right beneath my window. And the bearer of the light was a woman."

Is it a wonder that I started?

I did not know whether to question the girl further. I was afraid she would identify the bearer of the light as Claudia, and the others must have noticed my hesitation.

"I couldn't see her face very well," continued Phipps, "for it was partly turned from me. It was the shawl I noticed most."

"The shawl?"

"Yes; she wore it over her head."

"What about the shawl?"

The question came from me without effort, and the next moment I almost wished I had no tongue.

"It looked like the shawl Miss Claudia wore the night she went away."

It was out, and my heart seemed to take a tumble into the depths of my bosom.

"But Miss Claudia wouldn't come back here by night," said I, with some emphasis. "They make a thousand shawls of the same pattern. That is all. We must leave the solution of this mystery to the authorities."

I turned to John and nodded.

"You can go to Addison now," said I. "You know which horse to take."

I went back to my room and paused in the middle of the floor with a gasp. What did it all mean? The light, the girl and the shawl! Then, to crush me like a pair of terrible hands, was the dead man in the library. What had he seen in his last moments? Who had stolen into his presence on murder bent and sent him out of the world? And why?

Inside of two hours I heard voices below, and once more descended the stair. The voices were in the library, and when I opened the door I came face to face with two men, the lean-faced squire of the adjoining town and the fat, self-important constable, who looked as though the deepest mysteries were but child's play to him. The minions of the law bowed stiffly and the constable rubbed his fat hands.

"Bad business," said he with a simper. "But it's not more than I expected."

I looked Brutus Bobbs fairly in the face.

"Why have you expected something like this?" I asked. "My uncle was a harmless old man——"

"Your uncle, eh?" he interrupted. "By the way, who are you?"

"I am Roland Marshall, and I returned but last night after an absence of years."

"Oh, I see, the rolling stone!" he replied. "It's a remarkable coincidence. Don't you think so, Mr. Percy?"

The face of the country squire was sphinx-like. A thrill shot through me. I seemed to know what was passing through the constable's mind, and I realized that I was getting into troubled waters.

CHAPTER III.

CLAUDIA.

The day after the startling tragedy of the house on the marsh, I resolved to beat the adjoining region for Claudia. I felt that I could not have been mistaken as to the woman whom I had seen with the light in the marsh road. Years nor distance had not effaced her from my memory. I had seen her face when an exile in foreign lands, and in the darkest moments of my self-imposed wanderings I had gone back to her in thought if not in dreams.

My search would have to be carried on with caution, for I dared not investigate in the open. It was not likely that she knew of my return, or, if she did, she may have lost all concern for one who had apparently blotted her from his book of remembrance.

Watching my opportunity, I slipped from the house and went down to the road which, after skirting the fringe of the pool, lost itself on the sands of the seashore. It was a gorgeous day, and the very air seemed laden with the aroma of spring. The wild flowers were opening their varied petals and in the bushes the thrush was caroling her earliest lays.

I walked down to the hunting lodge which had been a familiar spot to me in my youth and, entering, tried to conjure up the days when I lay in ambush there waiting for the timid hares. The wind which came up from the surge stirred the fresh leaves and was the only thing that seemed to welcome me back.

All at once my eye caught sight of an impression in the ground at the entrance of the lodge. It was so like a footprint, and I knew I had not set my feet there, that I started forward, and the next moment was bending over the impression. A delicate shoe had pressed the yielding soil, and with my heart in my throat, I stared at it like Crusoe on his isle.

Had Claudia visited the lodge? Had she rested there before or after—I checked my thoughts and flushed. The afternoon was wearing to its close, and I saw in the west the first harbingers of twilight. Suddenly voices fell upon my ear, and I shrank back into the depths of the lodge. Some one was approaching, and I, being screened by a lot of vines that drooped over the door, stood immovable.

"It's pretty plain, don't you think?" said a voice I did not recognize.

"It's the coil," was the reply. "He came home the night it happened?"

"Yes, after being away ten long years. It was in the Marshall blood. He always was a wayward boy, and his wanderings, I fancy, did not take it out of him."

My gorge rose in spite of me, and I laid my hand on the vines intending to spring into the open and confront the speakers, but as suddenly refrained.

"What does Bobbs think?" resumed the first voice. "You know he cleared up the Nolan burglary seven years ago."

"Bobbs is a caution. He'd make a city detective if he had a fair chance."

"Yes, but what does he think about this affair?"

"You'll find out before many days; perhaps by tomorrow."

"He'll wait till after the inquest, won't he?"

"I presume so, but I think he's made up his mind by now."

"I've heard all sorts of rumors. It is said a woman was seen with a light the night it happened."

"One can hear nearly anything," with a chuckle. "But a person on murder bent don't go after his victim with a light."

"You're right, Sellers."

Sellers! The name went through me like a creese. I had not thought of it for years, but all at once there seemed to stand before me a dark-faced man who had been my evil genius. Jason Sellers, the wealthiest landowner in the region, had reported to my uncle one of my youthful slips, and thus I had incurred the dead man's disfavor. But for this, perhaps I had never gone a-roving, only to return to find ice where I had expected warmth, and to be met by a tragedy which had thrown a cloud over my sky.

"Bobbs will settle on the right one," I heard Sellers say. "He's got more real acumen than one-half of the city sleuths, and, then, he never had much use for that young blade."

The voices died away in the darkening distance, and when I ventured from my retreat the worthy pair had disappeared.

A sudden boom of thunder came from the sea. Over its rim hung a cloud rack that threatened to discharge its contents ere long. The wind had freshened heavily. Birds flew with cries to their nearby nests and I stood and watched the murk. I was suddenly startled by a figure which seemed to have risen from the ground. A little cry of fear fell upon my ears, and I stepped toward the lodge entrance.

I'll try the lodge till the storm passes," said a voice. "It may not last long."

I suppressed with difficulty the cry which bubbled to my lips. A woman stood before me, and, not seeing me, she threw out one hand to part the vines that almost hid the doorway. The next moment she caught sight of my figure and drew back.

"Pardon me. I did not know——"

"Claudia!" I interrupted.

She stood as one rooted to the spot and I fancied I saw her face grow white.

"Who calls me Claudia?"

"I do." I laid my hand on her arm. "I have come back, Claudia, but you may know."

She leaned forward and peered into my face. My heart beat like a bird against the bars of its prison.

"Look sharply," I said. "You haven't forgotten me, Claudia?"

She gave a little cry and held out both her hands.

"It is really Roland!"

At this moment the first pattering drops of the storm struck my face.

"You were seeking shelter," said I. "Why not let me share the old lodge with you?"

Before she could speak again I had drawn her into the structure, and the vines, falling back to their accustomed places, rendered the interior almost stygian.

"I came out to look for you, Claudia," I said, feeling her arm quiver under my pressure.

"Why for me? Did you not know that I am no more at Marshedge?"

"John told me you were not, but I thought you might reward my quest by coming back."

"Just as if I knew you were coming home from the other side of the world!" she laughed.

"Well, I have come back. You know what has transpired?"

The moment the last word had passed my lips I regretted it. My words to me seemed an accusation.

"I know," was the response, and then Claudia swept to another subject.

"What have you been doing all these years, Roland? Why did you not write? But, then, why should I expect a letter? We heard of you but once, and that was when Mr. Sellers came from abroad."

"What did Jason Sellers say?"

The old hatred of that man was rising in my heart again.

(Continued on page twelve.)

At Dead of Night

Or, THE PATERNOSTER ENIGMA

By Julian F. Darrow

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN IN THE ROOM ABOVE.

"WHERE to, first, sir?" The superintendent asked this question.

They had left the rooms where grim death stalked his prey, and were standing in the hall. Blair had watched his companion shut the door, and carefully lock it again after him. He knew that a head had been cautiously projected a few inches from one of the other rooms down the corridor; and that it was as speedily withdrawn each time either he or Tarbox looked that way, but he did not think this anything suspicious. Doubtless Mr. Toplady could not restrain his feeling of curiosity. He wondered who this party could be pottering around the apartment of Paternoster, and sending the manager of the building to ask such silly questions concerning a man of whom he had never heard.

"I wonder if we would find the gentleman upstairs at home?" mused the detective.

"Oh! you refer to Mr. Carberry?"

"I believe that was the name you mentioned."

"The chances are he is at home, sir."

"Well, could you frame up some sort of excuse to get him to his door?"

"You want to see him face to face—is that it?"

"Exactly."

"Well, he asked me if a certain little matter connected with his apartment could be changed. He is annoyed by the fact that the sun is reflected in such a manner that it shines brightly into his sleeping room at a certain hour of the morning, when he wishes to rest. A shade seems to have little effect, and he made a suggestion that I promised to consider."

"And you will favor him?"

"I suppose so. It was only a reasonable request after all."

"Which gives you the opportunity to see him just now. Good! Please lead the way, Anthony."

Again they took to the stairs. Indeed, it seemed as though the detective rather liked the idea of ascending by this means, rather than through the use of the elevator. He had a strong idea that these same stairs had played a prominent part in the preliminaries leading up to the late tragedy of the Compton, and he wished to satisfy himself that an adroit person could readily ascend without running much risk of being discovered by the employes connected with the house.

In this fashion they gained the next floor. Only one other now separated them from the roof. When the superintendent halted before a door, his companion drew aside. He wished to shelter himself somewhat, so that he could see without being noticed, when that same door was opened. That is always a point in the line of action marked out by a sleuth for his guidance. The advantage should be on his side. Obeying his signal Tarbox now knocked.

A movement inside the room announced that some one was moving about there. This would seem to indicate that Mr. Carberry, lately over from the other side, was out of bed. They could hear him moving over toward the door, and yet no answering call came from beyond.

Mr. Carberry was evidently not an impulsive party, and possessed a streak of caution. Possibly he had had considerable experience with clamorous creditors across the herring pond, and desired to be sure that it was a friendly knock before exposing his hand. So the superintendent again brought his knuckles into play. This time he also called out:

"It's me, Mr. Carberry, the superintendent!"

That seemed to be the magical "open sesame" calculated to unlock the door, for they immediately heard a key turned. Then the door opened. Mr. Carberry stood revealed.

He was in his shirt sleeves, and had evidently been in the act of buttoning his collar at the moment the summons disturbed his operations. His face was quite florid, and he certainly looked the Englishman he represented himself to be. Yet Blair had an immediate shock as soon as his eyes fell upon the man on the other side of that door, for he recognized an old friend!

What was the world coming to, that within the last half-hour he should run across two people sailing under assumed names, with whom he had had previous intercourse, and of a nature neither of them could remember with pleasure?

Mr. Carberry smiled affably.

"By Jove! sir, I wondered who the deuce it could be at me door at this beastly hour of the morning? I have an appointment, unfortunately, or I should myself still be in bed. What can I do for you, Mr. Tarbox?" he asked.

As yet he had not paid any particular attention to the figure that stood to one side.

"I was up here, sir, and thought that I might see you for just a minute, to tell you the improvement you asked for will be made immediately."

The superintendent made this speech as long as possible. He wished Blair to obtain all the mental photographs of the Englishman he wanted.

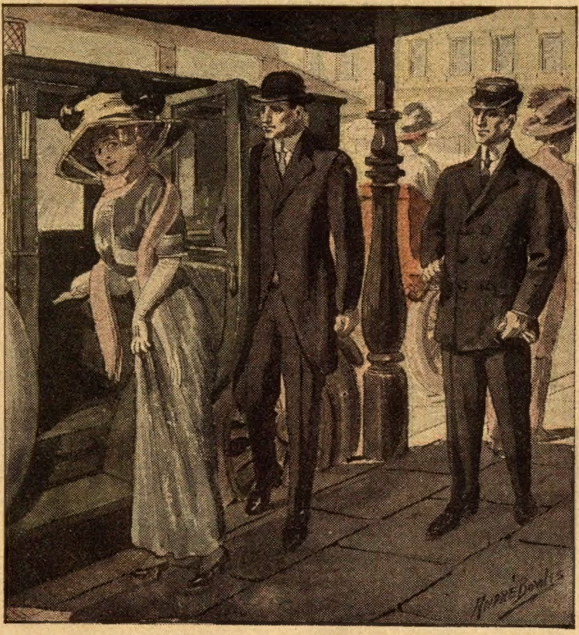
"Ah! that is very kind of you, sir, very kind. Rest assured I appreciate it exceedingly. When that vulgar sunlight dances into me room it annoys me more than I can tell you. And besides, it really exposes me to the gaze of any person who may happen to be occupying the apartment at the other side of the area you call a—er, well."

That was, of course, the true reason for his wishing a dividing screen to be placed in the broad air-shaft. He did not want any prying eye looking in upon him at unexpected times. It would be more than annoying.

"I must apologize for disturbing you at such a time, Mr. Carberry," the superintendent went on, wondering if his confrere were satisfied.

"Pray don't mention it, me dear fellow. You have put me under obligations."

The gentleman of the fourth floor had just uttered this remark when he became aware for the first time that the superintendent was not alone. A pair of keen eyes seemed to meet his own, and to compel an exchange of looks.



He saw a veiled figure.

Gideon Blair took a step forward. Mr. Carberry retreated at the same ratio. The two movements seemed to be invisibly connected, so that the one impelled the other.

Again did the detective advance. His foot passed the portal, but the occupant of the room made not the least attempt to close the door. The color did not fade from his face, since it was almost wholly artificial; but into his eyes had stolen a look of fear, coupled with disgust.

Imagine the astonishment of the superintendent as he saw this strange action on the part of the couple, and watched Blair stalk solemnly into the apartment of the imported guest. But Anthony Tarbox had rubbed up against the world many years, and could adapt himself to circumstances, however queer.

If there was anything of an interesting nature going on he did not mean to be cheated out of his share as a spectator. So he proceeded to follow in the wake of the sleuth, until he, too, stood within the confines of the room.

Then the silence was broken.

"Hello, George!"

It was the detective who spoke, and his stern face was wreathed with a broad smile.

"The devil take you!"

Mr. Carberry did not seem to reciprocate the pleasure in the least; in fact his feeling began to partake of anger instead.

"Fancy meeting you here, this lovely morning, George! And an alien too, a scion of one of the oldest families in Old England! I little dreamed of such a surprise when I called on my old friend, Tarbox!"

The man who was in his shirt sleeves brightened up a trifle.

"Then you weren't looking for me, Blair?"

"Well, not exactly, though I've been wondering what had become of George Considine for the last six months or more. Some said you had emigrated, and prayed most fervently that it might be so. Others declared you were dead. A few said Chicago or Omaha. And to think that you were with us all the while."

"Oh, no, you are wrong, Blair, wholly wrong. I've been over the water to claim an estate left me by an old uncle, and to take my right name."

But the detective chuckled only the more.

"Tell that to the marines, George. I know you too well. Up to some of your old games, I've not the least doubt. And even this request to Tarbox savors of your desire for privacy. It would be deuced unpleasant, for instance, George, to have some Paul Pry watching you as you unrolled your rope out of that window yonder, and prepared to descend to the apartment of the well-known and wealthy gentleman, Alexis Paternoster, who was reputed to keep more or less of the long green in his house safe! Eh, George?"

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE OBJECTS.

The superintendent started violently when he heard the detective say this. It opened up a new and startling field for conjecture. For he had already realized that this new guest, the pretended Englishman who had taken the furnished apartment left by the young gentleman who was traveling in Egypt with his aunt, must be some sort of a clever crook. Blair called him George Considine, and somehow the name seemed to have a more or less familiar ring in the ears of the superintendent.

"Indeed, you wrong me, Blair. I'm done with the old life. I'm really what I claim, and mean to walk the straight line from now on!" exclaimed the other, with a great show of virtuous indignation.

"Bosh! you never would have shown your face over in little old New York if what you say were true. They know you too well here, George, and England would have held you fast. I fancy you've got some big killing on tap; and possibly it has led you into paths that up to now you've never trodden."

"What d'ye mean, Blair? There's a hidden significance in your speech I don't like."

The detective came a little closer so that he could watch the eyes of the occupant of the room when he made his disclosure.

"Strange to say your very presence in a house seems quite enough to make things happen, George. Last night two separate robberies occurred in the Compton."

"I swear——"

"Wait. That isn't all; not by any means. It is hardly the beginning, in fact."

"Thunder!"

"A man was killed, George!"

"The devil you say, Blair! Do you think I'm a fool, to indulge in any such risky game as that?"

"He happened to be in the very room under yours!"

"Paternoster?"

"Exactly, the rich Paternoster, of whom stories have long been told. Now, you see what I meant when I referred to your window being just over his, and 'easy to reach with a rope.'"

"But I haven't any rope, I tell you. If I'm on any lay at all it isn't connected with a robbery in the house I call my present home. You know me better than to believe I'm the kind of a bird to foul my own nest."

"Yes, you usually worked away from home. But suppose you show me around a bit, George."

"All right," he replied, with alacrity, as might a man who was careful never to allow incriminating evidence to remain in sight.

"Tarbox!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly close the door while the personally conducted expedition is going on."

"Sure."

And yet the face of the superintendent expressed deep concern as he followed out the injunction. He was wondering where all this would end. Really, the Compton would be getting a bad name presently, if these things kept on accumulating, and his tenure of office must be cut short, which was a possibility that did not afford him any pleasure.

The detective made no show of a weapon. There was no need. George knew him too well to dream of offering the slightest resistance.

He opened his bag, and turned its contents out on the floor with seeming cheerful alacrity. Then he led the way to a closet, where every nook and corner that could possibly conceal a rope was carefully examined, without any result. After that Blair himself felt along the edges of the rug covering most of the floor.

By degrees he had made positive that there could not be anything hidden in the chamber, or in the bathroom adjoining. All the while he kept tab of the expression on the face of the other, as though depending more or less upon what he might read there to tell him the truth. George seemed anxious, but that was only natural in a rascal who was under sudden suspicion of having been concerned not only in a robbery but in something ten times worse.

"Are you satisfied, Blair?" asked the man, when it seemed as though every inch of the smaller apartment had been searched without result.

"I admit that it looks as though there is no sign of a rope here just now! Still a clever man like you would be likely to get rid of such incriminating evidence in a hurry, especially after hitting into a game you never calculated on, and which usually ends at the chair!"

"But I tell you, Blair, I'm not in on this game, not in the slightest degree. You're away off the true scent when you suspect me."

The detective looked at him steadily. Was the fellow guilty, or did his earnest words of disavowal ring true? It was utterly impossible to decide just then. A later search might disclose something that would fasten the accusing finger upon him, and this being the case, Blair did not dare let him go free.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, George, in whatever nice little scheme you may be exploiting now, but you've got to be kept in soak until I thresh this puzzle out. If you're entirely innocent there'll be no great harm done," he said, slowly.

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I suppose there's no help for it; but such cursed luck. Just when I was in the swim to win a rich wife too, and relieve you chaps of my presence for good, since we were going to reside on my family estates in England, which the lady's money would put in shape again. But please make it as easy as you can, Gideon. Don't disgrace me before the mob."

"Oh! we can walk out together, and no

one need be any the wiser. I'll just have you detained without bail on an indeterminate charge until I find out the truth about Paternoster."

"That's kind of you, old man, and I promise you I'll be eternally grateful."

"But don't imagine that even if you are cleared of this charge I'm going to sit by and see some innocent rich girl imposed upon by a sharper like you."

George threw up his hands.

"Innocent girl! Great guns! you should just see my prospective bride, Blair. She's fifty if a day, and it gives me a twist just to look into her face. But I'm her last hope, and I reckon that even if you tell her who I really am she won't give me up."

"Get your coat on, George."

"Oh! all right. It's deuced awkward, for I have an engagement with the charmer this a. m. But perhaps I can rig up some sort of an excuse. I'm ready."

"Mr. Tarbox, please lock the door after us, and let me have the key. Possibly I may take a notion to run up here later, to make a more exhaustive search."

But still George did not shrink.

"You'll have your trouble for your pains, Blair, take my word for it," he sang out.

The detective himself did not actually believe that Considine had committed the robbery, and the crime associated with it. A hasty examination of the window-sills had convinced him that no rope had as yet been used; for with a man's weight at the end it must have left some sort of mark to tell the tale. Besides, every thief has his peculiar methods of procedure while endeavoring to fleece the public; and hitherto the history of George Considine did not follow such a groove as this burglary. He was more of a slick confidence man, a glib talker, and something of a hypnotist, especially in connection with gullible females.

But the conditions were such that Blair did not dare omit the slightest move that seemed to have a bearing on the ultimate outcome, and hence George must content himself with being separated from his charmer for a more or less extended period.

The trio went down in the elevator, chatting amiably, as though there was was nothing amiss. At the door Tarbox said good-by, and saw the sleuth saunter off, arm in arm with the supposed red-cheeked Englishman, who was taking matters as coolly as though he had little to fear.

Tarbox was indeed bewildered by the multiplicity of clews, leading in various directions. Arundel, Cassie, Carmen, and now George Considine—he could not for the life of him decide which seemed to offer the best field for conjecture. But then, that was not a part of his business. He could leave it to Blair, accustomed to wrestling with such mysteries, and solving riddles that to ordinary people looked like blank walls.

Indeed, Tarbox came to the wise conclusion that he would have enough to occupy his time and attention in repairing his own fences, and attending to the gaps that a single night had made. Two burglaries, a murder, and now the discovery of a notorious crook in the house, passing himself off as a foreign gentleman—surely that was enough to keep his wits busy for some time to come, if he hoped to save his position.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HELD ARUNDEL.

Blair did not return immediately to the apartment house after he had secured a snug nest for Considine at the station, where he would be kept until wanted. He might as well start out upon his investigation line, now that he was on the street, for he had about made up his mind that the real business to be conducted would take him into fields far removed from the scene of the murder itself.

Again he glanced at the slip of paper upon which the address of Ralph Arundel was written. It was half-past eight. He could reach the place by nine, at least. Of course, it was a question whether he would find the man he sought there. If the valet were guilty, he would have fled from the city long ere now, pursued by the haunting specter of that lifeless figure huddled in the easy-chair.

On the other hand, should he have been detained by any natural cause, the chances were he might even now be on his way to the scene of duty. Blair was curious to learn something about the man he had once known as the "Weasel" on account of his never being caught asleep. He found it difficult to believe that the man had ever reformed; but was more inclined to take it for granted that he had changed his methods, and was now playing for high stakes.

Well, if this proved true, he had certainly gone beyond his depth now. That crime of murder had an ugly sound about it. It would wind up some evildoer's career in haste.

Presently he was passing along the street mentioned on the slip of paper. The neighborhood, while hardly refined, was by no means disreputable.

Tenement houses sheltered myriads of families, mobs of children played on the streets, small stores were to be found here and there, and around on Ninth avenue the elevated trains clattered along at intervals. In just such a locality a clever crook might think it well to hide himself, expecting to work under cover of the semi-respectability of the neighborhood.

Just as he anticipated, the number which he sought proved to be that of a swarming tenement that sheltered five floors of families. Blair entered, passing a group of children. A woman was just coming down the stairs. She had a basket on her arm, and was evidently about to attend to her little family marketing for the day. Blair was seeking information, and knew how to draw it out of people, with a pleasant smile to back his questions.

"I'm looking for a friend of mine who told me he lived in this house," he said, approaching the woman.

"So," she replied; which was plainly an invitation for him to go on further.

"His name is Arundel, Ralph Arundel," he continued.

Before she uttered a word he knew that the name was more or less familiar to the woman, for she gave just the least start, and looked more closely at him.

"A young-old man with a bald head and blue eyes?" she asked on her part.

As that was a pretty fair description of the Weasel as he remembered the clever crook, Blair nodded his head and looked pleased.

"That's my friend Arundel, sure," he said.

"He lives here then."

"On which floor, ma'am?"

"Fourth—same as I do," she answered.

"Front, or back?"

"Back. He'll be right glad to see you."

Then she went out, leaving Blair wondering more than a little what she meant. Why would Arundel be glad to see him?

If, as looked possible, the valet of Mr. Paternoster had returned to the apartment house at dead of night and, interrupted in his stealing by his employer, had recklessly turned upon the gentleman with murder in his heart, he would hardly be glad to see any one, especially an officer of the law.

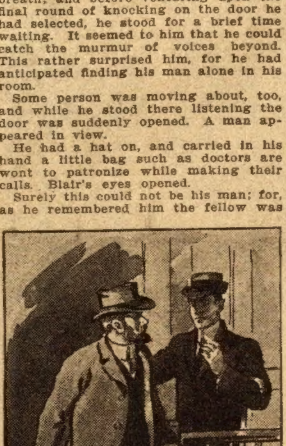
But at any rate there seemed some reason to believe that not only was this building the hiding-place of the man he wished so much to see; but that Arundel was even then in his den. At least he could interpret the words of the woman to mean that. So he began to ascend the stairs.

By the time he reached the fourth floor he found himself a little short of breath; and before venturing upon the final round of knocking on the door he had selected, he stood for a brief time waiting. It seemed to him that he could catch the murmur of voices beyond. This rather surprised him, for he had anticipated finding his man alone in his room.

Some person was moving about, too, and while he stood there listening the door was suddenly opened. A man appeared in view.

He had a hat on, and carried in his hand a little bag such as doctors are wont to patronize while making their calls. Blair's eyes opened.

Surely this could not be his man; for, as he remembered him the fellow was much more slender. Then a second figure slipped out of the door. He saw them speak together in low tones, but was too far away to catch what was said.



"Excuse me, but are you a doctor?"

After that, the one he recognized as the valet once more withdrew, the door was softly closed, and the professional-looking party started to descend the stairs.

Blair did not mean to let him get away without some sort of explanation. So he followed him down, overtaking him on the next landing. Hearing his swift pursuit the other stopped, and looked around with mild inquiry in his eyes.

"Excuse me, but are you a doctor?" asked Blair.

"Doctor Herron, office on Twentieth street. Can I do anything for you, sir?"

"No, sir, but I wanted to ask you how Ralph Arundel was getting on?"

"Getting on? Well, there's nothing the matter with him that I can see. He's just as happy this morning as the proud father of a ten-pound girl ought to be."

Blair could not keep from smiling when he heard this astonishing declaration.

"Fine!" he exclaimed;—"and have you been with him most of the night, Doctor?"

"Since eleven, barring half an hour just at dawn, when I had to run around to my house for something. I was afraid to leave, lest complications set in. But it's all right now, and if you come from his employer, tell Mr. Paternoster that Ralph will be back inside of an hour. He's been very kind to Arundel during the last month or two, and the fellow appreciates it, too. Good morning, sir."

The doctor passed on down. Blair did make the least effort to detain him. On the contrary, he stood there, shaking his head and smiling, as though rather tickled at the way in which one of his leading clews had turned out. It narrowed the chase, and that was about the only consolation he could get out of it.

Should he go away without seeing the man whom he had once known as an ex-convict? He had taken a new name, and seemed to be trying to live down his unsavory past.

Blair sympathized with all such endeavors, and he could not resist the temptation to congratulate the valet of the late Alexis Paternoster. Besides, Arundel must soon know that he had been cheated out of a job by a queer twist of Fate; perhaps it were better that he learn the unpleasant truth at the hands of a friend. And so Blair once more approached the door, beyond which he now could make out the whining cry of a tiny creature, come into this world to play its appointed part.

He knocked. Purposely he drew his hat down to shield his face; for he did not want the other to recognize him immediately. When the door opened he saw the object of his search, and beyond was a rather sweet-looking woman in bed, holding a bundle on her arm with tender care.

"Is this Mr. Arundel?" he asked.

"Yes."

The valet was looking at him curiously, perhaps with a trace of alarm in his manner; for doubtless he was ever haunted by his past, and dreaded lest it arise to confront him again.

"I'm from the Compton. Please step out here, and shut the door."

Wonderingly the valet obeyed. He had been a barber before he became a thief, and hence when he took up the role of valet he was well fitted for carrying it on.

"Do you come from Mr. Paternoster, sir?" asked the other, as he turned to Blair.

"Yes."

"And does he want to know how things are coming on? He has been mighty kind to me, right along. Please tell him everything is all right, and that I'll get over just as soon as the woman who is to stay here, comes."

"It would do no good to carry such a message, for unfortunately Mr. Paternoster is dead!" said Blair.

CHAPTER IX.

CHANGING BASE.

"Dead!"

Ralph Arundel staggered back as he repeated this terrible word. He stared at the unknown messenger as though his recent joy had suddenly been turned into blank despair. The cup was dashed from his lips.

"Yes. Some person entered his rooms during the night, and robbed him. Mr. Paternoster was found dead in his easy-chair this morning, with the marks of fingers upon his throat. He had been choked to death!"

Purposely Blair took off his hat just then.

He wanted the other to see him, and he knew from the clenched hands that his ruse had succeeded.

"You—believe that I did it?" came in gasping sounds from the agonized Arundel.

Almost unconsciously he lowered his quivering voice, and gave a quick glance back toward the adjacent door, as if fearful lest the one on the other side might overhear some of this terrible conversation. Blair put out his hand.

The wretched man shivered, doubtless thinking it was the dreaded touch of the law he was about to experience, and he knew what that portended. To his utter amazement the detective clapped him on the shoulder, just as friend meets friend.

"I may have had my suspicions, but they hold good no longer, for I interviewed your family doctor, and he assured me that he had been in your company since eleven last night, and that clears you."

"Thank God! For Betty's sake more than my own I say that, and the kid, too. You know what pulled me out of the old rut, now, Mr. Blair?"

"Yes, and it isn't the first time the love of a good woman has been the saving of a wild lad. I'm glad to know it, my boy. Shake hands with me. Success keep with you as long as you pursue the honest track."

Arundel grasped his hand feverishly.

"This is mighty good of you, sir," he whined, almost overcome by his emotions.

"I don't see how. You deserve the assistance of every decent man and woman. And depend on it, not a living soul will ever learn your secret from me."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Blair! When I met Betty, somehow I got ashamed of all I'd done. And then and there I swore that if so be she'd have me I'd live a clean life always. I've kept it going for nearly two years now, and it comes easy. If only some of my old chums don't find me out."

"Oh! not much danger of that. You've changed some, in looks as well as in name. Because I recognized the snapshot Tarbox took of you is no reason others will. I happen to have a gift that way."

"I was afraid that picture might get me into trouble," said the valet, uneasily.

"Well, you were wrong. It's been the means of keeping you out of trouble, because it put me on your track instead of some gumshoe cop, who would believe you guilty just as soon as he knew that Mr. Paternoster's valet had once done time."

At these words the valet again looked toward the door.

"Have you kept it from her?" demanded Blair.

"I did for a time, being afraid to speak; but when I found out what a woman in a thousand Betty was, I just up and confessed one day to everything."

"Well?"

"She didn't hate me. She even said she cared more for me because I was a sorter prodigal son, you see. It pleases her to know that it was love for her that changed me, and made an honest man out of an all-round crook. But I never had much chance as a boy. My dad was a drunkard, and my mother died when I was little. I got kicks instead of advice, and it was easy to begin to steal. But Betty understands. And Mr. Blair, nothing on earth would tempt me to go back to the old life, while Betty lives and believes in me."

"I'm dead sure of it. And don't you worry about this new trouble. Your doctor can prove that your skirts are clear, and such an alibi is a good thing to have at such a time."

"But poor Mr. Paternoster—to be killed like a dog!"

"It was a tough ending; but few people will mourn for him as you may."

"He was good to me, sir."

"So I am told."

"And it leaves me out of a job, just when I have so much need of working, with another mouth to feed."

"Don't let that bother you. I happen to know an elderly gentleman who is in need of a valet; and in this instance you will not have to hide your past from him, because he is just looking for chances to help a deserving man rise above his evil nature. You leave it to me, and believe all will be well."

"I must, sir, and believe me, I'm grateful to you. Ought I to go over to the apartments now? I am willing to do as you say."

"Then stay here. You've got a good reason for remaining away. And in case any one questions you, tell them I called on you, and gave you orders." Again he pressed the hand of the relieved Arundel.

Once more the stern minion of the law smiled as he caught that wailing of an infant, and noted the anxious yet proud look on the face of the valet. Then he turned away. His mission here was done. The clew that had pointed toward Ralph Arundel as a possible guilty wretch had after all proved a false beacon. That physician's alibi would cover the valet as with a mantle of charity, proving that he could not possibly have had any share in the double crime at the Compton, since no man can be in two places at the same time.

Blair could now cross this line of investigation from his tablets. It had turned out a very interesting event; but so far as carrying him any closer to his goal, his pursuit of the missing valet had proven to be time wasted. Not that he regretted it a particle.

Blair as a rule carried out his work after a system that had long ago become a part of his nature. When entering upon a complicated case it was ever his habit to arrange the various suppositions in his mind, just as the expert driver of a four-in-hand might the sheaf of reins which he controlled. Then, one by one he would pursue these clews industriously, until he either struck fire, or else pruned the possibilities down to zero. With him it was always a case of "welcome the coming, speed the parting guest."

If not Arundel, then perhaps Cassie, or it might be, Carmen. Flushed with the ardor of the chase, and having once embarked upon the sea of chance, he was not to be restrained longer.

(Continued on page thirteen.)

The Winning of Mary

Or, HEARTS OF GOLD

✿ ✿ ✿

By FERGUS JEROME

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CHAPTER VIII.

SPURRED ON BY HER FAITH.

THE outlook was far from cheering.

No matter which way I tried to see light, gloom obscured my vision; for now that these lawless men had suffered from our hands nothing would cause them to give over the attempt to capture our fort, and either take us prisoner or finish us—if there was going to be any choice in the matter I earnestly hoped, for her sake, it would be the latter.

One desperate chance there seemed to be, and I was compelled to smile at the abject paucity of hope attending it—supposing that already we had made great inroads on the number of pirates on the island; and another battle might so reduce their fighting strength that they would feel it judicious to set sail for home in order to gather reinforcements—then if we could only lay hands upon one of their boats, abandoned by reason of a shortage of men to man the same, we might take to the sea, which, despite the danger of another typhoon, would surely be less merciless than these human tigers.

Strangely enough, upon my mentioning this to Mary, she seemed to take some stock in it, and declared that should such conditions come about, gladly would she venture forth upon the bosom of the treacherous China Sea, with but a frail boat and my arm alone between herself and destiny.

I hoped the enemy would not take to trying to starve us out, for while that could not be done, since we had provisions enough to last for months; still, the continued suspense, together with the many threatened assaults, would wear us out, so that sooner or later we might be caught napping at our post. Better that there be another pitched battle, no matter what chances we were compelled to endure; for with the conclusion of this might come our golden opportunity. Understanding that these clever scoundrels could not be asleep, but must be up to some cunning trick, it was next to agony to remain cowering there, not knowing in what direction, or under what conditions, the next event on the programme would appear. I even made occasional tours around the premises, limited though they were, in the hope of learning something connected with their scheming, catching some sound perhaps that would give the secret away.

In this manner I heard scratching noises without that for a brief space of time puzzled me, until all of a sudden it broke upon my mind that the besiegers must be dragging dead brush and palm leaves together in a heap, with the intention of firing the same and burning our defenses. This was an emergency that I had not anticipated; but apparently it had to be met promptly, or the thing would be accomplished.

I had amused myself in manufacturing a few homely bombs, under the impression that in some way they might come in handy; and the chance to utilize them seemed already at hand; so gathering them together I lighted the fuse of one and tossed it over the stockade, aiming to have it alight as near the working group as possible.

I heard Mary give an exclamation of astonishment as she saw the hissing contrivance vault over the palisade; but immediately after there was a loud cry from without, followed by a detonation that fairly shook the wooden wall, and then a flash as of lightning, succeeded by an inky pall of darkness, groans, loud voices, and at last utter silence. Nor could I detect any more rustling sounds to indicate that the human beavers were hard at work building a dam; for they had been suddenly convinced that the vicinity was filled with unseen perils, that even dropped from the skies.

If all our anxieties could be as easily disposed of we would have very little reason for complaint; but fortunately they only came one by one, and not all in a lump; so that with a reasonable amount of good luck we should be able to master them.

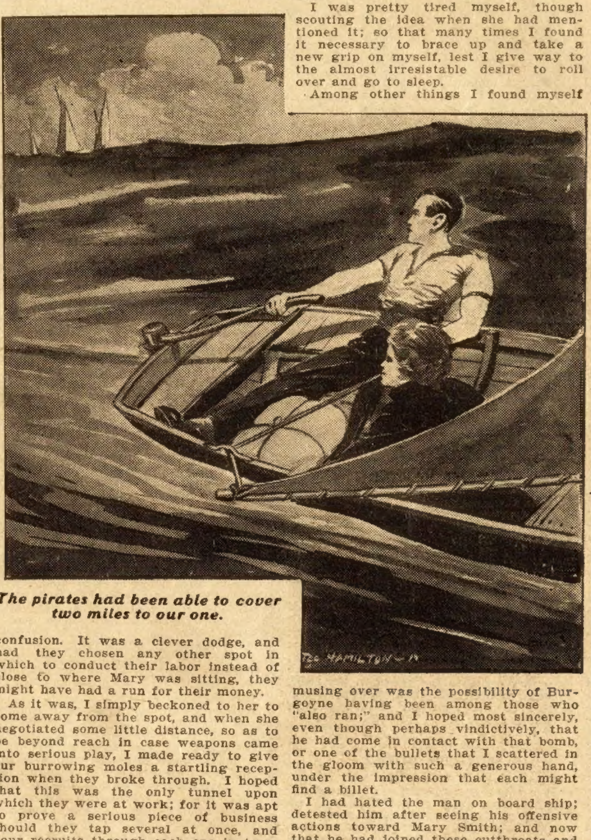
I adopted other tactics calculated to engender still further respect for us in the minds of our foes—whenever I had reason to believe a number of the pirates had gathered in one place, so that their whispering reached my acute ear, I thrust the muzzle of my rifle through a small crevice and opened a hot fire on the spot, trusting to luck to puncture one or more of the yellow confreres. In this manner I kept them guessing as to what next would happen to break the monotony, and filled them with respect for my prowess.

When once more I stopped near Mary, in making my rounds, she caught hold of my sleeve, and as I bent over, I heard her whisper in my ear:

"There is something going on under the earth, for twice I have felt it tremble. Is this island a volcanic one, and are we in danger of submersion? Either that or else those wicked men are digging a tunnel under the stockade!"

I had already commenced to smile at her first suggestion, which seemed so remarkably overdrawn, when she gave utterance to the second thought, and in this voiced the very idea that had flashed into my brain.

Having made a sorry mess of trying to force an entrance over the top of the palisade, the Malays were now doing just the opposite, making ready to scoop a passage underground, by means of which they could crawl, one by one, inside our defenses, until a sufficient force had been landed to overwhelm us with confusion. It was a clever dodge, and had they chosen any other spot in which to conduct their labor instead of close to where Mary was sitting, they might have had a run for their money.



The pirates had been able to cover two miles to our one.

As it was, I simply beckoned to her to come away from the spot, and when she negotiated some little distance, so as to be beyond reach in case weapons came into serious play, I made ready to give our burrowing moles a startling reception when they broke through. I hoped that this was the only tunnel upon which they were at work; for it was apt to prove a serious piece of business should they tap several at once, and pour recruits through each one in turn.

Kneeling there, I placed my ear to the ground, and could even catch the grunting of the human mole who burrowed along, gradually heading upward, since he had passed the barrier, and was now well within the compound; it was with a grim sort of satisfaction, too, that I hearkened to this significant noise, for it always pleased me to give surprises when least suspected.

I think I must have miscalculated the distance a trifle, or else the fellow underneath had covered more ground than I suspected; at any rate, without the least warning, I found myself suddenly dropped into a ditch, and straddling some wriggling and struggling object which could be nothing more nor less than the object of my solicitude.

Although about as much surprised as he may have been, the advantage was all on my side; and more than that, I rode on top; so recovering from my momentary state of confusion I began to belabor him over the head with the gun I was carrying, until I had succeeded in reducing the fellow to a state of harmlessness. Then, alive to the situation, I discharged my rifle several times through the short shift of the abbreviated tunnel, thus giving due warning to the rest that the game being up, they had better turn their attention to other means of reducing the little garrison.

These things were rather exciting while they lasted, but although using up more or less surplus energy they were destitute of actual results, save to warn the enemy that we were constantly on our guard.

After that there was a dearth of anything in the line of excitement for some time; and knowing that Mary must be worn out with the turmoil of the long day, I tried to insist upon her lying down and obtaining some rest; which she finally made a pretense of doing; and yet I seemed to feel her curious and trustful eyes fixed upon me in the darkness, as though she would gauge the condition of affairs by my actions.

The position of the stars told me that midnight had come and gone, for which I was thankful, since our danger seemed greater while the darkness lasted than in the daytime; and I would not be sorry to see our old friend Phœbus climbing up out of his watery bed in the east.

I was pretty tired myself, though scouting the idea when she had mentioned it; so that many times I found it necessary to brace up and take a new grip on myself, lest I give way to the almost irresistable desire to roll over and go to sleep.

Among other things I found myself musing over was the possibility of Burgoyne having been among those who "also ran;" and I hoped most sincerely, even though perhaps vindictively, that he had come in contact with that bomb, or one of the bullets that I scattered in the gloom with such a generous hand, under the impression that each might find a billet.

I had hated the man on board ship; detested him after seeing his offensive actions toward Mary Smith; and now that he had joined these cutthroats and was seeking either to take us prisoner, for a purpose of his own, or murder us on the spot, my feelings became only more bitter, so that again and again I vowed to have it out with him to the bitter end should the fortune of war ever bring us two face to face.

Still the stars kept up their never ceasing westward march, dropping out of sight behind the horizon, while new ones came peeping up in the east, looking down with curious eyes at the strange scene being enacted below. Another hour and we would welcome the coming of daylight.

Perhaps the enemy had given up all thought of forcing an entrance to the stockade, and meant to try other tactics; but knowing the nature of these fierce sea-rovers I felt sure that they would hardly content themselves with keeping watch upon the place, hoping that hunger or thirst would win the day.

I cudgeled my brain, endeavoring to anticipate what their next move would be, for something told me they were bound to make just one more desperate assault before temporarily giving up the game, and going away to fill up their depleted ranks with others of their fierce breed. They had tried above and below—what now remained but a direct assault upon the door of the compound, which might be forced from its fastenings by the use of a palm tree as a battering ram?

Quietly, then, I set about arranging for a new surprise that might break up their plan, provided they attempted such a move; with half a dozen of the spare rifles I formed a battery, each being fastened upon a little platform, made for just such a purpose, and secured with stout lashings. When completed this battery combined its fire upon the spot exactly in front of the stockade gate or door, and where a group of men must necessarily be standing if they attempted to manipulate any such thing as a ram; while a deftly tied cord, running from trigger to trigger, afforded me a means of discharging the array of rifles almost as one, with a result little short of a cannon's efficiency.

I was rather tickled over the manner in which I arranged this contraption, and hoped it would not be for nothing, since I should like very much to know whether the thing worked as well in actual practice as it seemed to do in theory. Would the yellow wolves give me the chance?

The hour had dwindled down to half, now, and already in imagination, at least, I could discern the first faint gray streaks beginning to appear in the far eastern sky; if they intended doing anything at all it could not long be delayed, though I understood that with the usual cunning of savages they had probably refrained from action until now, believing that after a night of watchfulness we were apt to give way to slumber about this time.

And again it seemed that my reasoning was sound, for I caught the fluttering of many sandaled feet without, and then came a sudden shock, as some heavy object crashed against the door; and with the thunderous sound I pulled the lanyard of my battery.

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING FOR UNKNOWN SEAS.

At last my expectations were certainly fulfilled; for there was a rattle of shots that sounded as though some expert pianist had run a lower scale upon his instrument, as the row of rifles merrily coughed out their respects to the enemy. The discharge was instantly followed by shrieks and groans from the other side of the barrier, and I could plainly hear the shock of the timber being dropped from nerveless hands.

Plainly my clever little device had played the deuce with the assault; and it was hardly possible that the battering ram would be put in use again. I simply followed up my start by passing from one repeating rifle to another, throwing a new cartridge into the chamber, and finally drawing back to be ready for further business should it prove necessary.

But apparently the rascals had received a stunning blow, and were in no condition to make a second attempt, though I listened and waited eagerly, anxious to further decimate their number if necessary; for by this time it seemed as though my blood had become heated to a point where I could have rejoiced to see every one of these bloody fiends sunk deep in the depths of the ocean, and without feeling the slightest compunction.

Mary had been aroused by the crash of the log against the gate, and on top of this the volley from my crude battery; but she did not show any symptoms of fear, no matter what may have raged in her heart. Indeed, when silence followed and it became evident that the enemy had received another set-back, she came to my side, put her hand on my arm, and in her sweet way congratulated me on having once more proved myself master of the situation. I do not think I could have felt half so pleased had I been before a huge audience, receiving the freedom of the City of London, and honored as some great explorer; for her opinion was everything in the world to me just then.

As the minutes passed and no further sound of trouble came to our ears, I began to entertain hopes that my last blow had broken the spirits of the few remaining pirates; and that they might have fled in disorder to their boats, bent upon reaching their lair on the adjacent mainland, where they could secure reinforcements without limit, and, returning, crush me as one would a worm under his heel. At any rate such a change would give us an opportunity to breathe again, and lay some sort of plans for our future guidance; which, after the warm work of the recent past would be a blessing.

The light in the east grew broader and in my eyes seemed a harbinger of hope. Mary declared that she meant to cook a breakfast for me, since we had been subsisting on cold stuff too long; she seemed to be quite herself on this morning and even laughed cheerily; but I could see that it was assumed for a purpose, perhaps to deceive me, and that under it all she shivered at times at the remembrance of the dreadful carnage that had taken place since we were shut up in our island fort by the advent of the freebooters.

I felt sorry for the poor girl, realizing how her gentle spirit, all unused to deeds of violence, must have been inexpressibly shocked by the savage scenes accompanying this business; but it was a situation and not a theory that confronted us, and I was ready to declare that no girl whom I had ever known in the past could have done what Mary Smith did that night; so that I was ready to repeat what I had said before, that she was one among ten thousand.

It was broad daylight now, and Mary had kept her word, for a fragrant odor of cookery pervaded our place of refuge, and my appetite seemed revived to such an extent that I could hardly hold it in check until she announced that everything was ready.

That was a meal I shall never forget, and even as I write it comes again before my mental vision, and forces me to smile—I can see myself sitting at our rude, but serviceable table, partaking of a savory dish, and actually drinking coffee in the rough, without cream, but palatable at that; and Mary opposite to me, both of us chatting earnestly, yet ever and anon turning our regards upon the stockade without, as if fearful lest some dreadful shape might rise up and threaten our little Elysium with sudden disaster.

But no such alarm disturbed our meal, which gave me added reason to believe we must have frightened the beggars off with that last volley, so that possibly not a living man remained on our island possession to give us anxiety. I made up my mind that chances must be taken, and so immediately after breakfast made ready to issue forth to find out the lay of the land, and whether my theory held good.

Mary was plainly much distressed to see me go, for I could see the alarm in her blue eyes; and, do you know, the fact pleased me immensely, although I took myself to task for it, and mentally declared that I was a fool to think that she could have actually learned to love me in the short time we had known each other—with a man it was different, for he is built by nature to fall headlong in love with an angel, while a girl had to know one of the opposite sex ages before discovering that he had become necessary to her. Of course, she realized her utter dependence upon me, and that if anything happened to deprive her of my protection it would be nothing short of a calamity for her, which would in a measure account for the look of deep anxiety in her dear eyes.

But no matter how I tried to explain the fact, the memory of the last earnest look she gave me, as I slipped out, and the touch of her trembling little hand filled my heart with thanksgiving; and I cheerfully pledged her to be very careful not to assume unnecessary risks. Indeed, had it not seemed absolutely necessary, I should never have thought of leaving her even for a minute; but according to my mind we were between the devil and the deep sea, and it seemed up to me to provide some way of escape. At least no shot followed my issuing forth, and that looked favorable.

Mary had been placed in possession of a ready Marlin with instructions to use it liberally should any occasion arise; she had also closed and fastened the good door in the stockade after I passed out, so that it appeared as though nothing evil might happen to her during my enforced absence.

The sights that greeted my eyes were far from pleasant, I assure you, and caused something like a shudder to pass over me; but I clenched my teeth savagely and said to myself that these were hardly human beings, although bearing the outward semblance of such, and that in dealing with such savages one must look upon them in the light of animals, for their instincts are all along the lower order.

I counted seven still figures in sight, and there could be no telling how many more may have been hidden in the bushes; our little Eden, which had in my mind been associated with everything delightful and pleasant, was now it seemed turned into a shambles, with dead Chinamen and Malays lying around like flies about a poisoned saucer on the kitchen table.

I waited not on the order of my going, for if there chanced to have been any of the yellow hounds left behind to keep tab on things they would be apt to pot me while I was crossing the open. But not a shot was fired, nor did I see the slightest indication of any living object around, save a flapping bird that had come to ascertain what all this singular scent of shed blood meant—possibly some sort of buzzard drawn from the mainland to the scene of carnage.

I dodged across the open and entered among the bushes, heading for the hill, as it was my object to ascertain whether the enemy had really flown. Twice I stopped to listen, my heart in my mouth, as it were, for some sound had floated to my ears from the region of the home fort, and my thoughts were wrapped up with Mary and her safety; but on each occasion it proved to be the cry of some fluttering sea-gull seeking a breakfast among the small fish in the lagoon; and I resumed my journey upward with new relief.

Before I even gained the peak, I discovered the boats of the pirates far away toward the mainland, with sails set, and looking like a little covey of frightened birds as they fluttered across the shining expanse of water, under the influence of the early morning breeze.

Never before had I wished to see a tropical hurricane swoop down upon the ocean with demoniac fury; and yet I would have eagerly welcomed such a spectacle just then, since it must have wiped out the last remnant of our bitter foes, and prevented the news of our occupancy of the island amid rich spoils from reaching the villages of these sea tigers on the distant shore. But there was not a cloud the size of my hand in sight, and it was apparently useless to hope for such succor.

I counted the boats and found that there were three; the question now arose as to how many the flotilla had consisted of when they arrived; but as those in sight were apparently so small I had a pretty firm conviction that there must have been more than that originally, to have accommodated the crowd. Upon that point depended all our hopes of leaving the island and taking our chances upon the open sea; accordingly I lost no time in speculating on matters that could not concern us, but hurried down to the shore, bent upon searching in every nook for signs of an abandoned craft.

Judge of my delight when shortly after I came upon a boat hidden behind some tall canes that grew in riotous profusion in a cove; it was a small specimen, but to my eye looked quite seaworthy, and I knew from experience how these craft of the tropical islands can stand up under heavy weather. And it was well that this proved the case. Otherwise I could never have moved the little vessel from her moorings in the mud, where they had hastily drawn her before departing, evidently not wishing to divide their reduced force too much by manning four boats.

Once afloat I poled along the shore, heading toward the point nearest our fort, and coming in sight of the place, let out a cheer that immediately brought a response in the shape of a waving flag from the inclosure. Time was an object with us now, and feverishly I ran the nose of my capture on to the shelving beach, and jumping ashore, hurried to join Mary.

She showed about as much excitement as urged me on to hurried movements, and so we began to carry down to the beach many things that had been gathered together in anticipation of this lone chance.

Our precious cask of water went first, being rolled readily enough, and raised on a plank to the deck of the little craft; then provisions came next, which were piled on the shore, waiting to be loaded after we had brought down clothing, blankets and a lot of stuff that promised to come in handy should our voyage upon the China Sea be protracted.

It was an exciting time, sure enough, and I never worked with more of a vim in all my life; I think Mary was keenly desirous of getting away from the sight of those sprawling figures around the edge of the bushes—I had dragged them off so that they might not shock her womanly senses too much—for she seemed just as eager to do her share of hurrying as myself.

There were a few more small things she said she wanted to take along; which I fancied were more in the line of mememtoes of our strange marooning than because they promised to come in useful to voyagers in these warm seas; but I told her to do just as she pleased, while I finished loading our traps in the cove just opposite the break in the reefs through which we had floated when lashed to the spar on that night of storm and terror.

CHAPTER X.

THE AWAKENING.

I had hoisted about the last of the stuff aboard and was thinking of calling aloud to her, since it was full time we started, if we wanted to take advantage of the breeze now blowing from the land, when there came a half-muffled cry that pierced my brain like a rifle shot, for it was in her voice!

I snatched up the handy gun and jumped from the beach, running like a deer toward the scene of our late camp, my heart throbbing with the pulsations of an engine in my breast, as I conjured up all sorts of terrible things. Although it took me but a few seconds to gain a position where the stockade was in full view, it seemed ages in my mind, such is the result of suspense.

I saw nothing at first, but remembering that Mary had been working inside I continued my rush across the intervening space, speeding like a comet through the open gateway, where a scene burst upon my startled vision that filled me with indignation and fury unparalleled—the girl was struggling once more in the hands of a man who was dressed after the fashion of the Chinese, but whom I immediately saw was a European, none other than the villainous Lucian Burgoyne.

Just how he came to be left on the island, I could not, of course, guess, nor was that a matter of any consequence to me; he may have remained on his own account, to spy upon us while his allies were gone for reinforcements; and again possibly they had cast him adrift, looking upon him as bad prophet, in that he had led them into such disaster.

It was enough for me that he was there, and that she struggled in his degrading embrace, while he exerted his strength to reduce her to a state of submission, no doubt fearing lest I might be attracted to the spot. Little the brute suspected that my keen ears, attuned to the slightest sound from her dear voice, had already caught the little cry she had given utterance to before his hand closed over her mouth.

Not one word did I utter, though my eyes must have flamed with the madness of fury as I ran; she was giving him more than he expected in the way of resistance, despite his strength, for as I always knew she had a plucky heart, and was not to be easily subdued; and in his rage the accursed scoundrel actually struck her in the face.

That was the limit—I think things went black before me after that, but somewhere close by my ears a rifle barked snappily, and when I came to myself I had Mary in my arms, and there the miserable turncoat lay writhing on the sand, with my bullet in his shoulder. But Mary had not fainted, though the shock of the dastardly blow must have been severe, and as she struggled out of my embrace she tried to look brave and thankful at the same time.

"You are not seriously hurt, then, I pray Heaven!" I managed to gasp, when she even smiled and shook her head.

"No, no, it does not matter. But we must get away from here, for there may be others on the island besides him. If you will carry this down to the boat, I think I can walk, John Henry," she said, in a trembling voice.

Now, it had been in my mind that I had rather carry her in her weakened condition; but I did not voice my thoughts, for she had a way of looking straight into my eyes that completely subdued me; and so I snatched up the plunder, though insisting that she go ahead of me, weighted with the two guns, for I did not intend leaving any firearm to that treacherous coyote sitting groaning there inside the compound for fear lest he attempt to shoot me unawares in the back—it would have been just like his cowardly nature.

I had put my burden aboard, and assisted Mary over the side, so that nothing now remained to be done save push off and get some sail on the little outrigger native craft; but just then Mary uttered an exclamation.

"Oh! please see if you can hoist that aboard!" she said, and to my surprise her finger pointed to the blessed spar on which we had floated to the island through troubled seas, and which was lying on the beach close at hand.

Now, I knew of no use we could put the thing to, so it flashed through my mind that possibly she may, in her girlish way, have entertained some sort of sentiment in connection with that same bit of wood, which, of course, had been the means of saving both our lives; however, her wish was law with me, and so I extended my remaining strength to lift the spar over the side, so that it quickly lay on the deck.

Mary was blushing, perhaps because she considered on second thought what a peculiar request this had been, and doubtless wondered what I would think of her for allowing foolish sentiment to break in upon such serious business as that we had before us; but to tell the truth, that spar had a secret hold upon my own affections, and often had I stooped down to pat it affectionately when passing, in remembrance of how it had served us, and especially because it had so stanchly borne her precious form to safety on that dreadful night of wreck and disaster.

The boat was now afloat with the two of us on her; and having already arranged in my mind just what I anticipated doing, it was but the work of a few minutes to get the sail working, when she began to move through the quiet water of the lagoon like a thing of life.

After all of these weeks ashore it gave me the greatest satisfaction in the world to actually feel a deck under my feet; and the motion of a vessel, diminutive and dirty as it was, sent the blood dancing through my veins; for that spirit of the sea had always been a strong factor in my make-up.

Just then a shout came from the shore, and loking thither we could see Burgoyne running down to the water's edge in which he actually waded, holding out his one sound arm as if pleading with us to return and take him aboard; but I would as soon have thought of allowing a wildcat to join us as that sneak, and I sternly turned my head away, though I saw concern upon the face of Mary, as her blue eyes tried to seek mine—for only once I was grimly determined to have my own way, nor did I ever regret it.

"Let him stay there, the skunk who would dare strike you, and thank his lucky stars I refrained from killing him on the spot, as was in my mind, only for your presence and need of assistance! His friends, the sea tigers, will call for him sooner or later; and even if not there is an abundance of food to last him many moons. No, he comes not here to try his treacherous work again. Please do not try to influence me; and at any rate it is too late now, for, as you see, we are just about to pass out through the break in the reef."

So Mary said nothing, wise little woman; and presently, under my deft manipulation the Malay craft skipped through the friendly opening that had received us at the time of our first introduction to the island, and in another minute we found ourselves on the broad ocean.

Whither to go—south, north or east—was now a question. West was barred from all our calculations, for there lay the hostile land where murderous pirates had their hidden lair, and only peril could meet us in that quarter. Taking advantage of the fair wind I thought it best, on the whole, to turn our faces toward the southeast, in the hope that we might sight some friendly vessel upon which we could take passage.

The breeze freshened, and we seemed to be doing very well; but I knew that these modern pirates along the shores of Southern China and the Malay Peninsula were possessed of swift craft, and possibly even something in the shape of steam, by means of which we might eventually be overhauled, if so be they chose to chase us. Now, I secretly wished that white dog whom we had left behind on the island had received his death wound in the last little affair between us, for it was certain that if the scum of the seas landed there first, he would put them directly on our track; for I had sighted him on the peak long after we quitted the shore, and my glass told me he was watching what course we took with apparent interest, as though determined that we had not seen the last of him yet.

I influenced Mary to lie down upon some of our blankets in the shade of the sail, for the sun was already beginning to be scorching hot out there on the water; and as the hours passed I kept heading in the general quarter where the expected help was most apt to be found.

So noon came and found us, with my comrade preparing a tasty little lunch, such as it would never have entered into the head of a man to arrange; and I thought, while sitting there eating what she spread before me, that I had little reason to raise any sort of complaint with the way in which fortune was treating me, even if I had lost four precious weeks of time while marooned on the island, which it would now be impossible to make up. One look into those trusting blue eyes satisfied me that I had gained something for which I would willingly sacrifice everything else on earth; and it was therefore in rather a contented frame of mind that I attended to my duties as head navigator, and at the same time did justice to Mary's spread.

Slowly the afternoon passed. The breeze almost died out for several hours, and Mary insisted that I lie down to secure some rest, for she could see by my manner that I was perilously near the point of exhaustion, after my strenuous day and night without sleep; she promised to hold the tiller, and to call me if the least sign of a change came about; so I cuddled down just where she had been, while she took my place.

From where I lay, with one arm thrown up over my face, I could just see her pretty face against the sky; perhaps it was a strange thing for a man almost dead for sleep to do, but I could not help it, and it seemed to me that I never tired of feasting my eyes upon her adored features, so great a factor in my existence had they now become.

But I must have dropped off while thus gazing, for I knew nothing more until I felt her plucking at my sleeve some time later, and heard her say something in a voice indicative of alarm. Hurriedly getting to my knees I looked around, hardly able to grasp the situation for the moment, it seemed so strange to be there, out on the open sea in a cockleshell of a boat, and with her; but immediately I discovered that the sun was no longer shining furiously, for clouds had drifted up across its brazen face; and looking backward I saw several sails in sight, bearing down upon us.

The discouraging truth flashed upon me—with their greater spread of sail the larger craft of the pirates had been able to cover two miles to our one, and it now began to look as though we were bound to come in contact again with them, this time without the advantage of a stockade which they could not pierce, for only the frail sides of our small boat stood between our safety and the missiles they were bound to launch as soon as within firing distance.

My heart went down again with fear and doubt, as I saw in imagination my sweet companion struggling in the grasp of those dark-browed fiends, or finding a last resting-place in the depths of the sea, from which I had once been enabled, through the mercies of Providence, to save her.

Vainly I swept my eyes around to ascertain whether there might not be some other vessel in sight, from which we could look for succor; but nothing of the sort came within range of my vision.

It appeared then, as though I must once more fight for life. Accordingly, with my spirit still unbroken, and my determination just as firm as ever, I began to get the guns out, resolved that they should never be able to say they

(Continued on page fourteen.)

A Mock Marriage

Or, LOVE'S IDIOSYNCRASIES

By ELLA MARTIN

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CHAPTER XI.

REUNITED.

GLORIA BENNETT was strolling down the same woodland path as on the day she had met Glen Alden coming up from the lake with his string of finny beauties. She was deeply absorbed in thought, and the scenery around her, for once, received scant attention. It was time now for her sister to join her, if she obeyed the summons to come to her as quickly as might be. And she believed Lillith would come, if Max had not betrayed the fact that Glen was there also. He would know of no reason she thought, why he should not mention her name, as it was supposed her family knew where she was spending the summer. She could only hope that Lillith had missed seeing Max since his return, which was the very thing that had happened, as the reader knows. It was chance that had thrown them together again, her sister's husband and herself —chance and the fortune-teller; but she could not expect Lillith to believe their meeting here accidental, if she knew of it, considering the wild confession she had made to her on the day of her return to her own home. She had declared that she and Glen loved each other, and censured her mother for keeping them apart.

How long ago that all seemed! She could not quite believe she was the same girl. What a change a few weeks had brought in her feelings! And all because she had encountered the inevitable. Verily, love is full of indiosyncrasies and propinquity is responsible for more matches than even affinity.

"How I wish I had not made that assertion to Lillith," she said, remembering the declaration of her love for Glen.

For a while she gazed absent-mindedly toward the dark blue of the sky, which showed above the treetops. A bird was singing in a bush close by—a bird strange to her—and she forgot all else while listening to its trills and warbles. Then, after it had flown away, and was lost in the maze of treetops beyond, her mind went back to the old subject.

"I must have been mad to do it—to declare that I loved him! I don't feel that way toward him now. And I must have imagined he cared for me because of my preference for him; if he ever did, it is all over now."

She had strolled farther than usual, and was in sight of the lake in which Glen had been fishing on the day of his sudden return to Chicago. She followed the path down to the beach, where the tiny waves came rippling to her feet, and paused to gaze across the water.

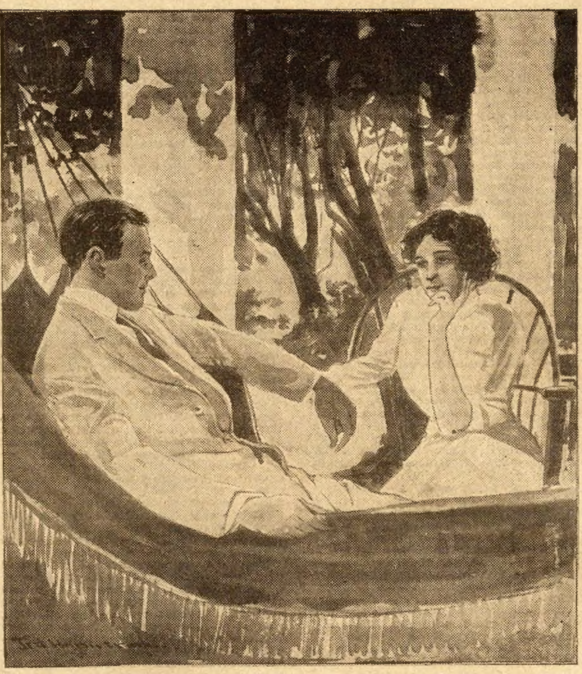
There was a lone fisherman some distance from the shore, but he sat facing the other way, his line dangling over the side of the boat. He appeared to be in a day-dream instead of alert to the sport in hand. There was something familiar to Gloria in the appearance of the still figure in the boat, but it seemed to belong to a dream.

There are many lakes in this mountainous region, and, as it happened, most of the men had gone in other directions that morning. Perhaps that was why the lone fisherman had chosen this unfrequented spot. He was certainly not much interested in his occupation.

The lake was smooth as a piece of glass. Gloria had seen these mountain lakes when agitated by rough breezes, and the waves had broken at her feet on the strand. She had a collection of shells and pebbles which she had gathered from the shores of different lakes since she had come to these mountains. However, she did not linger here; everything was so still she was afraid the quiet figure in the boat might intuitively feel her presence on the beach and turn and spy her standing there alone watching him. What if he should? She did not know what difference it would make, but she withdrew, nevertheless, before he should turn and discover her.

"How much he reminds me of—but no! it cannot be."

She hastened her pace until she was out of sight of the lake, the woodland being dense a short distance from its shore. She was sure he had not become aware of her presence in his vicinity, and now that she was safely out of sight she forgot him entirely, as she gradually became absorbed in viewing the landscape around her. Then her thoughts wandered back to Glen and Lillith again. Therefore she started when she heard a step on the grass beside her. She turned to face her old lover—James Collier.



She had found Jim—that was fortune enough.

With a gasp she straightened up, the blood receding from her face. She stood like a frozen statue, her starry eyes wide and unbelieving. The meeting was unexpected to both, and like Gloria, he stood in frozen silence.

"James—Jim!" she faltered, and the name left her lips little above a whisper.

The spell of silence was broken, Jim Collier threw down his rod, and the one lone fish he had caught in spite of his inattention to business, for his heart had not been in the occupation that is supposed to be the best of sport.

"Gloria!" he cried, and caught the girl's hands before she could escape. "Gloria, my love! I have found you at last!"

She shrank away from him, but he drew her into his arms, and she did not struggle, though she drooped her head and let her gaze rest upon the ground. She was dying to look into his face, but she could not lift her eyes.

"Gloria, where has your mother kept you? She left New York that she might keep you hidden from me. I am rich now—wealthy enough to satisfy your mother that I am a suitable match for you. And I have looked the universe over, trying to find you."

The white hands trembled in his clasp.

"You didn't think to look in Chicago, did you?"

He suppressed a smile.

"It was the only place I didn't look, I assure you. You are of age now, and she cannot separate us. We still love each other. She thought us too young then, but now she has no right to keep us apart. Gloria, speak to me!"

She lifted her face and looked at him, but she did not answer. But the light on her face encouraged him, and he caught her to his breast again and kissed her.

"Oh, Jim!" she cried, "it is good to see you again! Your poverty never made any difference to me. We were poor ourselves then. But that was the very reason mother wanted me to steer clear of a poverty-stricken future. But Jim, dear, did you really try to find out what had become of me? We quarreled, you remember."

"Yes, I remember. It was because you permitted your mother to part us. But I have tried to find you. It was only lately that I heard you had inherited great wealth, and had moved to Chicago, where none might know of your former poverty. I happened to visit a cousin of mine, who lives there, a short time ago, but that was before I knew you were living in that city."

"A cousin!" she exclaimed. Somewhere she had met some one who resembled him. She had this in mind when she said. "You have a cousin living in Chicago? Who is he?"

And it happened—just happened to happen—that he made her the same reply as Max had made Glen Alden.

"Oh, I have several cousins in Chicago."

And Gloria had not the same reason as Glen for questioning further, so she asked another question—several of them, and learned all about his efforts to find her.

"And now," Jim added, "I am in a position to go boldly to your mother and claim you. You will accompany me, my darling? You need have no fear; she cannot part us now."

"She will not try, believe me," and Gloria in her new-found happiness could not help smiling at her mother's expense. "She is not having great success in the management of her daughters lately. I will go back with you, certainly; but I cannot go for a few days, as I am expecting my sister to join me here. I must wait until she arrives. Then, if nothing happens, there is another who will take her off my hands."

Then she told him of Lillith's marriage and of the things that had happened since.

"And Jim, dear, I must confess that I have loved another since we parted, or fancied I did. But somehow it didn't last, because, I suppose, you had my heart in spite of all."

"Oh, that is nothing," Jim replied, happily. "I know all about that! It is just a little burst of spurious affection, closely resembling the genuine article. One is subject to it only when denied the real thing. One must have some place to bestow his surplus feelings."

He was thinking of Fern Alden and his protestations of undying love. He had sworn to possess her, simply (he realized it now) because she objected to being possessed by him. He never knew how seriously she had taken his ravings. He laughed now, as he remembered his extravagant language to her. It would have amused him to know that it was Fern's brother who had been the object of Gloria's admiration. Long afterward they compared notes and had a good laugh together over it. And as it transpired, Gloria could show the better reason for being attracted.

Happy in their reunion, the two took no note of the flight of time while awaiting Lillith's coming. Gloria had no explanations ready to give her sister; she left everything to Glen, just as she had left to Fate her own affairs when she took the old gypsy's advice and came here to seek her fortune. And what the gypsy told her had come true—she had found her fortune here in the Adirondack Mountains. She had found Jim—her girlhood's lover—that was fortune enough.

As the reader knows, the pseudo-gypsy was responsible for the presence of our friends in the Adirondack region, but not for the fact that they had all come together in one particular locality; that was the workings of chance, or the hand of Fate.

The two reunited lovers, happy because freed from a long estrangement, walked side by side back to St. Hubert's Inn. Occasionally they glanced at each other shyly, but fondly. They were like strangers, almost—each shy of meeting the other's eyes, but they were happy, and the world was forgotten. There were only they two in all the universe, so far as they were concerned.

We will leave them together and follow Glen Alden, who was in Chicago, ready to take the train the minute his wife was on board. Lillith had obtained a berth in a Pullman, as he had expected she would. He could not engage one in advance, not knowing in which coach she would travel, or even that she would respond to her sister's summons at all. But the porter fixed it up for him so that he got a compartment directly opposite hers. It was nearly midnight when Lillith entered the train. Her berth was already made up, and she retired at once. She had not glanced about, and so Glen who kept his face turned away, and his hat pulled well down escaped recognition, as he desired.

Being young, and of a sanguine temperament Glen did not lie awake worrying about how he should make his peace with his neglected bride, but fell at once into a peaceful slumber, just across the aisle from her, leaving even the story he meant to tell her in explanation of his peculiar conduct to inspiration at the moment needed.

At the sight of his wife, in all her fair young beauty, as she stepped from the platform into the car, his heart had given a throb of exultation. She was his by right of law, in spite of everything. It would be difficult for her to renounce him, if he willed otherwise. And he did will otherwise, now—now that he had seen her. He was viewing his marriage from a different standpoint, and it seemed that his mind had been under a cloud all this time.

He had not known it before, but he realized now that it was the difficulty of gaining possession of her that made the game interesting. It was going to be hard for him to win the love he had thrown away—the woman he had flung aside. And therefore he was the more determined. There is no accounting for love's idiosyncrasies. Glen did not understand it himself, but the desire to win the affections of the girl he had unwillingly wedded, and who now was unwilling to accept her place as his wife, came to him suddenly, and remained in unabated strength. He was half ashamed of the tenderness born in his heart at the mere sight of her, but as it increased in force he began to grow ashamed of the treatment he had accorded her.

The following day she sat inside her compartment with the curtains drawn aside; for, though the windows were open, it was too close within with the curtains together. She had kept them closed for a while, and it was nearly noon when Glen got his first glimpse of her. He was growing nervous with the suspense of waiting. Then, acting on a sudden idea, he turned to the window and kept his back toward her till the first call to the dining-car.

The first intimation Lillith had of the identity of her fellow-traveler was when she looked up, after the porter had passed through, and found her truant husband standing beside her. Taken by surprise, she gave a little gasp of astonishment, not so much because he was there, but that he had stopped to speak to her—he who had deliberately run away from her. She had never credited that story of important business. Her face paled at first, then the violet eyes flashed with anger, though the tears were very near the surface.

"Wait," he said, "don't speak! I can explain. Give me a chance!"

"I want no explanation from you, sir!"

"But I want to make one. You cannot refuse to listen; you are my wife."

"Pardon me, I am nothing of the sort!" She was nearly choking with anger. "That ceremony was a mere form—a farce, a mockery! I refuse to recognize it as a marriage at all!"

"But refusal to recognize it won't undo it," Glen said, philosophically. "We must come to an understanding. As a matter of fact, I am your husband, whether you choose to acknowledge it or not. Come with me to the diner. We are both hungry, in spite of all mistakes."

Lillith smiled—she could not have helped it to save her life. She was hungry, and she could not deny it; but she could dispense with an escort, and she told him so.

"But I assert my right to pay your bills. Besides, we have to make the journey together, so we might as well be friends."

She thought him a man of nerve, though it was not exactly the sort of nerve she admired. Still, it must have required considerable courage on his part to address her at all, under the circumstances, and likely he had the right kind of nerve also.

"What use to explain?" she asked. "I will never forgive you!"

"I was not going to ask for your forgiveness," he replied, in a humble tone. "I was going to tell you all about it; then you might judge me differently."

She hesitated. There might be some plausible excuse, after all. Hesitation is fatal to the most firm resolution; it is the beginning of reconsideration. It leaves one open to conviction, and often ends by one going over to the other side. She glanced around to note whether any one had overheard their conversation, and met the eyes of several of the passengers fixed upon them. She rose and preceded him to the dining-car. This was not the place in which to discuss domestic affairs. For the same reason the subject was not taken up after they were seated at the table, with the waiter, in immaculate linen, awaiting their orders. Lillith studied her menu card to cover her embarrassment, and in a low voice ordered about half what her appetite craved, as Glen easily divined.

"About enough for a chickadee," he said, boyishly, and Lillith, forgetful of everything but the present, smiled again. "Oh, bring anything and everything you have," he said to the waiter. "We'll send back what we don't want, and pay for all of it."

He was a trifle nervous himself. He had started out to support his wife with a lavish hand, albeit it was a little late to begin. They both colored at the thought of it.

Lillith fingered her purse nervously while Glen paid the bill at the conclusion of the meal. They had talked pleasantly together, with more apparent self-possession than either felt. Glen was beginning to feel smaller and smaller in this woman's presence. The excuse he had contemplated making, a spurious one, seemed impossible now. He began to feel less faith in the newspaper jokes about the ease with which a man lies to his wife. It took courage of a strenuous sort, he believed. A man must have some sense of honor, in a thing of this kind. It would be detestable to look into clear, believing eyes and tell a deliberate falsehood. The wild idea he had entertained of manufacturing a story to account for his absence fled while on the way back to their seats. As they came opposite her compartment he motioned her to the farther side—taking the seat next to the aisle himself.

"Now for my explanation," he said, as easily as he could.

She made a deprecating gesture with her slender white hand—the one on which she should have worn his wedding ring. She had removed her gloves before eating, and he had noticed the absence of his ring at once.

"We must have an understanding," he said.

She settled back into her seat, reluctant, but convinced of his better judgment. She had been so rebellious in her thoughts of him, intending to dismiss him without ceremony if he ever returned to her. And now, so far, he had had his way about everything. She was indignant because he had made it impossible for her to carry out her resolutions, without a feeling of unfairness on her part.

Glen picked up the ringless hand.

"Let me put the ring back," he said.

"I flung it into the street," she replied, and drew her hand away.

"Then I will get another."

"Indeed you will not!"

Glen drew a long breath and gathered up his courage. Then he told her the truth, as the reader knows it; and since it was the truth he could put feeling into his utterances. And having really experienced a change of heart, he could put an ardor into his pleadings that made its genuineness felt.

"I love you," he said, "I loved you all the time, I believe; but I thought you had married me without love, and would be glad of your freedom."

There was a moment of silence, then Lillith said:

"We both have much to overlook. The marriage was of our parents' making. Left to ourselves——"

"Left to ourselves we would have married for love some day," he interrupted. "We are in the same boat—we let our parents manage our affairs, and since they made a bungling job of it, we must take matters into our own hands and settle it to suit ourselves."

"I think you have taken them into your hands without consulting me; for it is plain enough to see it was at your instigation that Gloria sent for me, but I can't just understand why."

"Can't you see? I wanted you?"

So much in earnest was he now that he had forgotten his main object then was to leave Max free to go back to his old allegiance. He bent forward and asked with a tenderness he really felt:

"Don't you think we could be happy together?"

"We might have been if there had never been an estrangement between us," she replied, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then it is all right!" he exclaimed, joyfully; "there was no estrangement, it was merely a misunderstanding."

No one else was in the car at that moment, so he gathered her into his arms impulsively. There was no resisting him. He was boyish in his happiness, but he had come into man's estate. He loved and pursued, he was tender, but masterful; and Lillith's reluctance vanished gradually, but entirely. She had loved Glen Alden, and so when her resentment died away she surrendered.

Glen took the two trembling hands in his, their eyes met; hers held a shy, eager light, his a bold, ardent one. With that he drew her head on his shoulder and kissed her quivering lips. There were tears in the eyes of both.

"We shall love each other always," he whispered, "we couldn't help it after that kiss! Eh, sweetheart?"

"I loved you from the first, Glen, I shall love you to the last," she said.

She had entirely surrendered now, and it was from that moment their wedding journey, their real honeymoon began.

It was while they were on their way to the Adirondacks, where they were to witness the union of Gloria and Jim Collier (though that was a surprise that awaited them), that Max Folsom, who had not even called at the Bennett home, entered by a side gate the court in the rear of the Alden mansion. He had been told that Fern was there, and he found her walking among the shrubbery in the dusk of the evening. And before she was aware of his proximity he stood within arm's length of her. She started in surprise, but gave a glad cry, for there was a look in his eyes that made her welcome him.

"I have learned your secret," he said, without preface, looking at her with mock gravity. But he smiled reassuringly as she shrank away. "That mock marriage was too real to be set aside easily, so you sent me from you. Who is the lucky man?"

He struck an attitude and gazed at her mockingly. Fern sank upon a rustic seat and buried her face in her hands.

"I do not know."

"Can you not guess?"

"No. Helen said Jim Collier could enlighten me. Glen promised to ferret out the facts, but got no further than to learn it was a cousin of Jim's. Then she looked up hopefully. "You know Jim Collier. What is his cousin's name?"

"He has several cousins, I believe."

The same answer both Glen and Gloria had received.

"Name them all!" she cried, rising excitedly. "I must know to whom I am married!"

With a quick movement that took her entirely by surprise he caught her to him and held her close against his breast.

"I do not know them all," he said, laughing; "but one of them is Max Folsom! And," impressively, "he is the man you married!"

CHAPTER XII.

ALL ENDS WELL.

They were all back from the place in the Adirondack Mountains where the fortune-telling gypsy had sent them; and they had all found what they had been in search of—Max Folsom the information he was seeking (for he had been on the trail of his cousin, Jim Collier), and Jim and Gloria had found each other, and consequently their life's happiness; Glen and Lillith had found peace, and, indirectly, each other.

Now they were all assembled at the Alden home, which was lighted up from garret to cellar. It was in the evening after Fern's wedding, and the spacious rooms were decorated without regard to expense, but tastefully withal. The bride and groom were to take a trip to the Adirondack region for a honeymoon among the glories of Nature. Fern, as it will be noticed, was the only one among the young folks who had not yet responded to the suggestion of the gypsy to visit that place in search of her destiny. But her destiny had come to her while it was yet June—the bridal month.

It was after the guests had departed that Mrs. Bennett called the family together in the private parlor, where Mr. Alden, much improved in health, sat awaiting them with eyes that sparkled. He knew the nature of the disclosure that estimable lady was about to make. In short, he was at the bottom of it; he had urged this thing till he could no longer be denied. After they were seated, awaiting her pleasure with expectant faces, Mrs. Bennett, who had kept Gloria standing by her side, opened the subject.

"Now that we are all one family, in the sense that a connection by marriage makes us one," she began, "and can keep the secret, as I have done so many years, I have yielded to the pleadings of Mr. Alden, who has wormed the truth from me, little by little, to disclose our secret of the past."

As she spoke she drew Gloria forward, and simultaneously Mr. Alden rose with outstretched arms.

"This man," said Mrs. Bennett, "is your father, child!" And Gloria, shy, and wondering, permitted him to embrace and fondle her. She saw in an instant that this was the barrier between herself and Glen—she was his half-sister, while Lillith was the child of her mother's second marriage. Also Fern, as well as Lillith, was her half-sister.

She understood Mr. Alden's antipathy to divorce now. It had been the mistake of his own life, and had deprived him of his first-born, of whose very existence he was ignorant until he met his child after she had grown to womanhood, and felt the yearning of the parent within him, and recognized the Alden lineaments.

"My children," he said, addressing the couples recently launched on the matrimonial sea, "you know now why I have denounced the divorce institution. A hasty marriage, followed by divorce was one of the mistakes of my own life. This dear child has been deprived of a father's love and protection, has never known her sire till she meets him now, a stranger, after having grown to maturity."

Glen and Fern rose and greeted their new-found sister—Glen, with a flush, inwardly thanking his lucky stars that he had never made open love to her. He felt foolish enough as it was. But the kiss he gave her was a warm one and called the blushes to her cheeks. Lillith felt a load lifted from her mind, for she realized now the source of their attraction for each other. The tie of blood, though unsuspected, had given rise to their preference for each other, and they had mistaken it for love of a different sort, at first. Now both understood why, of itself, it gave place to a milder affection.

More explanations followed, in which was made known how the elder couple, having made a hasty marriage at an age when they were incapable of choosing with judgment and deliberation, had repented almost immediately, and sought a legal separation. Then the two had drifted apart, only to cross each other's path again when Mrs. Bennett, widowed and possessed of great wealth, had come to Chicago, seeking admittance to the fashionable set, where the story of her former poverty was unknown. Later, they had watched the mutual attraction of the half-brother and sister in secret dismay. It was but natural that they felt drawn toward each other, and to save them both from needless heartache, this revelation of the past had been made, though it was hardly necessary now, since the young people were all happily married. Still, it seemed best that Gloria should know the relationship between herself and Mr. Alden.

Everybody gathered around the united pair, and shook hands with the father and kissed Gloria. And everybody talked at once. For leaving Gloria and her new-found parent out of the question, was it not an occasion for rejoicing? With Glen and Lillith so lately reconciled, Gloria and Jim ditto, and their marriage so recent; Fern and Max the bride and groom of a few hours; and last, but not least, no one but the old folks divorced, or ever likely to be, as Mr. Alden had feared—it was truly a time for merrymaking.

The wedding had taken place at high noon, but by the time the confession and explanations were over, and the congratulations and demonstrations were somewhat abated, it was nine of the clock, the time at which the gypsy fortune-teller usually ascended her throne.

After things had quieted down a bit Max spoke:

"There is another mystery to be cleared up, another secret to be unearthed; and I suggest that we all combine in an effort to learn the truth. I have had my suspicions for a long time, and I mean to verify them this very night. I have already telephoned to the old gypsy that she may expect us at nine o'clock. So get ready, all who wish, or can be persuaded to accompany me. I intend to advise our monitor to make a trip to the Adirondack Mountains."

"But we do not need to consult her any more," Lillith said, earnestly, whereupon everybody laughed, out of the lightness of their hearts.

"Yes, I know, everything has come out all right," he said, "but you may be sure she never found it out from any occult power she possesses. A knowledge of palmistry doesn't include the sort of things she told us. She has proved herself ignorant of even the rudiment of the art. There is something more to it, you may believe, and I shall find out how she came to know so much about our affairs, or fail trying. I believe it was all meant for a practical joke."

By the time he had ceased speaking every one of them, with the exception of the older couple, was ready to go with him to the den of the gypsy fortune-teller. They went by twos, not to impress the gypsy with the number of equipages at her door, but because they were all agreed that two were company, and three or more, a crowd.

Mrs. Bennett returned to her home alone, and Mr. Alden retired to his private study, a much happier man, there to await the return of his children—three couples, all told.

"Well," he mused, "I am rich in blessings, though Ellen and I are parted forever—victims of the divorce institution. It is better, I suppose, as Ellen says, that we remain only friends; we ought never to have been anything more to each other. Our love in youth was weak and fleeting, and now—well, now there is nothing but dull, gray embers on affection's hearth. After all, divorce cannot get in its work if Cupid's darts are of sufficient strength.

"I feared at one time it would be the means of wrecking the happiness of our two children, whom we urged into a marriage—that their barque would be wrecked on the shoals of an indifferent affection, as our had been, and the demon of divorce, love's own wraith, would put them asunder forever. Then there were Glen and Gloria, not knowing the relationship between them, but feeling attracted to each other because of it. True, real love came between, and they also are happy now. Well, 'all's well that ends well,' thanks to Shakespeare for the saying. And I have nothing now to worry over; the last years of my life may be spent in peace."

So the old man mused in their absence, happier than he had been for a long time, for the burden of care had been lifted from his mind, and the child he had yearned for since he guessed of the relationship was restored to him.

Meanwhile, the three couples stormed the quarters of the fortune-telling gypsy. They were requested to enter the inner sanctum one couple at a time.

"We have no secrets from one another," Max insisted, "and will enter the august presence all together."

He pushed by the attendant, and drew the damask curtains aside.

"Come, then, if you must," came a shrill voice from within. And they advanced and gathered in a group at the foot of the gypsy's throne.

It was evident that the fortune-teller was agitated, for her hands trembled as she reached for the palm held out to her. It was Max who took the initiative, and his piercing eyes were watching her narrowly. Evidently, she was aware of this, and hesitated for a second, her gaze shifting. At last in a low, husky voice she began:

"You are a bridegroom of only a few hours, and you intend to take your honeymoon in the Adirondack Mountains, from which place you lately returned. To your bride only will the place be new, your companions having but returned from the trip."

"So," said Max, meaningly, "you can tell about the others by looking in my hand only? You know—have known right along, things that could not be read from palms or pools, or by crystal-gazing. Had you been a private detective, paid to keep on our trail, you could not have learned all you know concerning us. A good deal of it was guess work, helped out by a knowledge of our characters. And Fate, or chance, has done the rest—for we have all found a fortune that pleases us by going to the place you recommended. And we think you would do well to follow suit.

"And now, my lady, you are a fake! For you are not a gypsy, nor even a professional fortune-teller; and you are not even old."

The draped individual drew her habiliments closer about her, and her eyes snapped; through the holes in the mask they looked glittering and beady.

"There has only good come of your mischievousness, whether you meant it so or not. I will give you the benefit of the doubt. There is only one person who could by any chance know so much of our affairs, or be capable of carrying out a prank like this. Shall I name your identity, or will you unmask? I think I have not made a mistake in guessing who you are."

He moved between her and the curtain-hung doorway, through which she had once escaped from Fern Alden, barring her egress in that direction.

"You cannot escape! Take off the trapping," urged Max.

With a quick, but dignified movement, as if she gloried in the chance to reveal herself, the pseudo-gypsy rose to her feet and began slowly to divest herself of her disguise. The little party stood in spellbound silence and watched her graceful, yet deliberate movements. First she drew off the thin gloves that had hidden what were supposed to be withered, claw-like hands; then, what were really long, slender, white fingers, undid the wrappings about her head. And slowly, tantalizingly, ending with a little flourish and a bow, she removed her mask, revealing the plain features and mocking eyes of "Helen of Troy!"

"Helen Bliss!" Fern cried. "Impossible!"

She could scarcely believe her eyes, for she had distinctly heard Helen's voice behind her on the night when they had agreed to meet and consult the gypsy together. But now that she thought of it, she had not seen her as she left the place that night. But she had been sure of her presence in the anteroom when she entered the sanctum.

"Helen," she persisted, "how did you deceive me that night?"

"Oh, that was easy," replied the girl, with forced bravado. She was not quite as much at her ease as she appeared, not knowing how her friends were going to take the joke she had planned out of exuberance of spirits.

"I am something of a ventriloquist," she went on. "You never knew of that before, did you? Well, I was not accomplished in the art enough to venture an exhibition of it, or boast of my ability in that direction. But I made it work that once, it seems; for your supposition was that I was present in the anteroom, and your imagination did the rest."

"But why? Why all this trouble?"

"Oh, it was no trouble at all, I assure you—it was the greatest lark imaginable. I had to do something; life was so tame after the dissolution of our twin clubs."

"And that was your doings, too; I am sure of it now," declared Fern. "Was that done in a spirit of mischief, also?

You sent all those messages, just to break up the meetings, you know you did!"

"High time I did, too, wasn't it?" with a laugh. "We would have come to grief, sooner or later."

Fern Folsom flushed, and glanced shyly at her husband. It was true, they had gotten into enough entanglements. It was all for the best, no doubt. They were all in a fair way to win notoriety through the columns of the newspapers if the meetings were continued. For her part, she never wanted to meet with the club again. Her experience had spoiled that sort of life for her. It held no attractions now.

"You did all this from pure deviltry," said Max, severely. "It was only chance that brought things out all right."

But Helen only laughed in his face, unimpressed with the enormity of her conduct.

"If you didn't mean mischief, why didn't you let either of us know who the other was in that mock marriage? A transaction, by the way, which you planned and carried out yourself."

"Oh, I promised you both sacredly I wouldn't betray you! You wouldn't have had me break my oath, would you?"

"Don't try to impress us with your honesty. You have no conscience, or if you have, it becomes dormant the moment you see a chance to have fun at another's expense. It was you who saw to it that there was a real justice of the peace to officiate at that pseudo-wedding. You took pains to let Fern find it out, merely to worry her; while you sent me away, with your fortune-telling nonsense, to keep us apart. And only you got any fun out of all the maneuvering you did, just for a joke!"

"Oh," laughed the incorrigible Helen, "it was the means of bringing you together again. See here! I have told your fortunes correctly, not from your palms, but from my knowledge of your characters and my familiarity with your affairs, added to an acute divination. I wanted to see if I could do it. I have proved my ability, and I have enjoyed every bit of it. I meant no harm, and no harm has come of it. I think you will just have to forgive me! What are you making a fuss about, anyway? You are all happy and contented. I am the only one left forlorn!"

That was quite true; they all acknowledged the truth of her words. And had they all been at the Jolly Girls' Club, the feminine portion of this gathering would have raised Helen Bliss to their shoulders, and shouted "Hurrah for Helen of Troy! the necromancer! the dispenser of fortunes that come true!" and so forth. But it was highly out of place here in a mixed company, and the land of Bohemia, in which they had reveled for (as they interpreted it) the prevention of stagnation, was no more. It was dissolved, submerged in the sea of conventions. They must henceforth resume their old dignity, and if any there were who regretted their past good times, they yet had no yearning for freedom from conventional conduct. All agreed it was the safest and most respectable, where it was genuine.

"Well," said Max Folsom, who had constituted himself spokesman, from the first, as it was he who had undertaken to unmask the practical joker, "we will forgive you, since everybody concerned is happy."

Helen, who had been among the wedding guests of the day, laughingly thanked them, and then confessed to her own forthcoming nuptials. And when she had revealed the name of the lucky (?)—the word was questioned by Helen herself—man, they were surprised to find the prospective bridegroom was none other than Ed Huntley, whose acquaintance the reader made at the campfire on the mountainside, where Glen Alden and Jim Collier had discussed the subject of the mock marriage, and who was now in the city. Ah, so Helen had had an emissary at court! She had been kept posted. Only Max thought of this.

The girls kissed and congratulated her, but Max smiled mischievously, while Glen and Jim Collier seconded his suggestion that they go to the Adirondack Mountains for their honeymoon.

"I couldn't think of going anywhere else on a wedding journey," Helen told them. "I sent you all there because I knew Jim was there, and— well, I hoped something interesting would happen—and it came to pass! I was bound to secrecy myself, but I knew that Jim knew!"

But another Junetime had come before the "ugly duckling" (her own appellation) had married, and—we were about to say "settled down." But if "Helen of Troy" ever settled down into a steady-going conventional person, it is not recorded. But everybody was happy! So, who cares?

The End.

* * *

An Unwelcome Musician.

"Sad case of the fellow on the fourth floor!"

"What's that?"

"He plays the cornet for his own amusement, but he got so hard up lately that he had to pawn the instrument."

"Well?"

"Now he can't borrow a dollar in the entire building, because everybody is afraid he'll get the blamed tooter out of pawn."

FOUR OF A KIND.

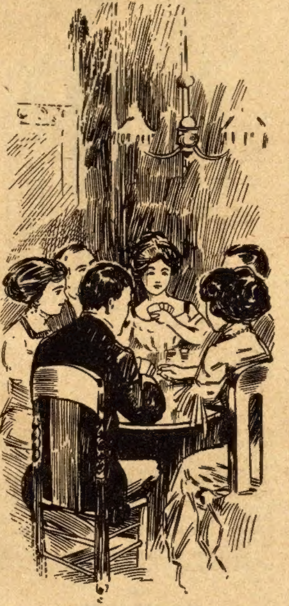
Mrs. Brooks noticed when her husband came home from the office that he seemed unusually genial. She wondered what was the reason, but knew better than to ask, because Mr. Brooks merely would answer. "Oh, nothing much," and probably put off revealing his information till the next day. So she held herself in restraint and duly was rewarded.

Mr. Brooks had taken only his first spoonful of soup when he began: "Say, I met Briscoe on the Subway train tonight, and he was asking me if I played poker. I told him far be it from me to boast, but I used to consider myself something of a sharp at the pastime. He then informed me that he and his wife and the Furmans had all discovered they entertained a mutual passion for poker, whereupon it was decided that a little club should be formed, to meet, say, every Friday night, and we should be invited to come in. So this is to be the first meeting of the club tonight, and we are to go over to the Briscoe's flat. Now, you play poker, don't you?"

"Ye-es," replied Mrs. Brooks somewhat doubtfully. "I have almost forgotten what I used to know about it, but I think I could keep up."

Now, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Brooks knew about as much about poker as she did about flying an airship, but she considered it wise not to confess the plain truth to her husband.

"'S all right," he said, with satisfaction. "If you've gotten a little rusty I can soon coach you back into form again. Funny that I couldn't remember whether you played poker or not, but it's been so long since I've mixed in a little game that I have forgotten nearly everything that used to pertain to it."



"Mrs. Briscoe opened as usual."

"Are the Briscoes pretty good players?" asked Mrs. Brooks.

"Sharks—simply sharks at it," replied Mr. Brooks. "And that reminds me that we don't want to let them slip anything over on us tonight. They're bully people and all that, but when they play they play to win, and Mrs. Briscoe has a faculty for keeping all the money she once gets her hands on, so you want to keep your starboard eye peeled and watch out for any cunning little tricks."

Thus did he rattle on in high good humor until the meal was over. Then he dug up a deck of cards and began to polish up Mrs. Brooks on poker. That lady had some acquaintance with cards through bridge and euchre, hence it was not so dreadfully hard for her to understand the mysteries of two pair, three of a kind, straight, etc., when Mr. Brooks ran rapidly over the main principles of the game, but there were one or two points that were not quite clear to her. However, she feared to ask too many questions lest Mr. Brooks get disgusted and swear. So she stilled her apprehension, and, hoping for the best, set out for the Briscoes'.

"I do wish we could hand it to the Briscoes tonight," he said. "I wouldn't mind losing to the Furmans so much, but the Briscoes are so infernally proud of all they do and have. They are convinced there is nobody else like themselves. If they trimmed us tonight they would have an air of superiority for a month. You are sure it has all come back to you?" he added.

"Yes, I remember everything now," said she, brazenly.

At the Briscoes' flat they were greeted joyously. The Furmans were already there, and after the usual preliminary chatter they lost no time in getting into action.

Nothing unusual occurred in the early stages of the game, Mrs. Brooks managing to hold up her end fairly well by dint of close observation and going through the same motions as the rest. Things broke about even for all for a while, and then Mr. Brooks began to build up his pile by a masterly series of bluffs.

Then, by one of those queer turns that cards take, the game went into the hands of the women entirely, and the men found themselves out of it. Mrs. Briscoe and Mrs. Furman flourished aces up, threes and straights, with reckless abandon, and though Mrs. Brooks could not put up the vigorous bluffs of her friends, she often was found to have a better hand on the showdown, having the usual "beginner's luck" in drawing.

It now was 11:15, and it was decided that at midnight the party should break up. Until one minute to twelve, Mr. Brooks remained intensely silent, occasionally glaring malevolently at his wife, who was convinced she was a mistake as a woman and a complete failure as a wife.

Then the last jackpot was called for, and everybody came in with fifty cents apiece. No one had openers, and the pot was fattened until Mr. Brooks was compelled to buy both for his wife and himself. Round and round went the cards, the chips rattled upon the table, and still no openers showed up. The pot was sweetened steadily till it contained upward of nine dollars, and everybody began to grow tense and silent. At last Mrs. Briscoe opened, as usual. Mr. Brooks sighed heavily in secret as he saw her lay aside one card. In despair he drew four cards to a jack and caught another one. His wife took two cards and looked over at him for a glance of encouragement, which he refused. The others all drew three cards apiece.

Mrs. Briscoe bet boldly, and was followed doggedly by all present. She continued to bet with an air of quiet power that convinced all hands she had a full house. Finally all dropped except herself and Mrs. Brooks. The only reason the latter stayed was because she had become so completely confused and upset she didn't know how to get out, and she continued to put in her chips mechanically, her eyes cast down.

At last Mrs. Briscoe called, with an air of self-sacrifice, as if unwilling to lead her rival any further into destruction.

"Full house," she announced confidently.

All eyes were then turned on Mrs. Brooks, who stared at her cards as if dazed. She raised her eyes and flushed painfully as she met her husband's menacing glance.

"I thought I had three of a kind—" she began tremblingly, "but—but——"

"Find you haven't anything," completed her husband, sarcastically.

"But instead it seems I have four," finished Mrs. Brooks.

With a bound Mr. Brooks was at her table.

"By hemlock!" he shrieked. "She's got 'em!" And clasped his wife in his arms.

* * *

Had His Faults.

In a certain town in the north of Scotland there was an old road sweeper, rejoicing in the nickname of "Barmpan," who was reckoned somewhat of a wag in his way, and was exceedingly tenacious of his rights and proud of his position.

It chanced that one day, while in the performance of his duties, he was injured by a passing vehicle. During the period of his enforced absence from his duties another man was appointed to sweep his portion of the streets.

In a few weeks, however, Barmpan was able to be out and about his duties again. Some days after he had resumed work a friend happened to meet him and ventured to ask how the substitute had performed his duties.

"Weel," said Barmpan, considerately, "for ordinary, strauchtforrit, doon-the-middle-o'-the-street wark he was no sae bad, but for the ornamental touches roon' a lamp-post he was nae guid at al'!"

* * *

Unconvinced.

Mr. Howells, according to a story that he tells himself, shares the fate of the prophets and heroes who are more esteemed abroad than in their own households. He says:

"I got into an argument one day with my wife on the propriety of using a certain word in a sentence. My wife maintained there was no authority in favor of my usage and I held that there was. So, to end the matter, I took the dictionary and looked it up.

"'Ah!' I said, 'here it is, with just the usuage I employed,' and I read the justifying quotation aloud. But my wife was still dubious. 'Who wrote that?' she wished to know.

"Again I studied the printed page. 'Why, it says "Howells."'

"'Oh,' answered my wife, with triumphant scorn, 'he's no authority.'"

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Sunday Morning.

Arry—Say, Bill, wot's the difference between a atheist and a agnostic?

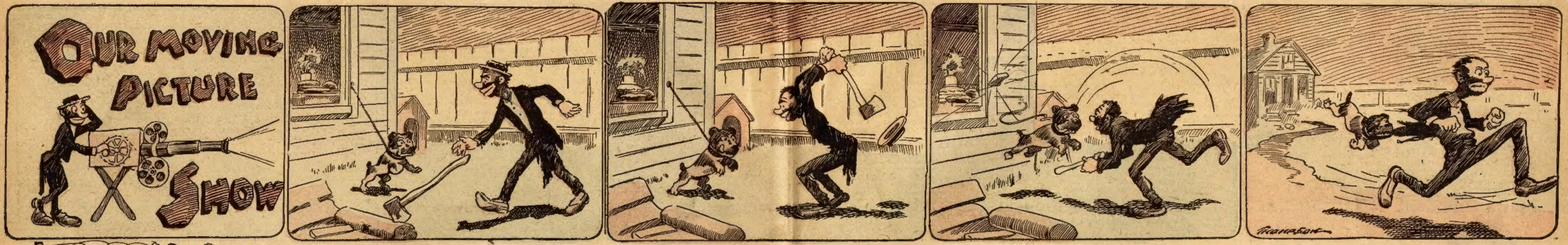
Bill—Well, yer see, a atheist don't believe in nuthink and a agnostic only believes in abaht 'arf of it!

Would Be Nice.

"Then you do not yearn for fame?"

"Not this weather. However, I wish the President would let me be Secretary of War long enough to take a trip on a yacht."

HUNGRY HARRY'S MISHAP.



Hungry Harry—Ah, me fierce dorg! I'll lay ye low with dis ax and den—

"It will be me fer the fine eats—

"Wow! De ax head come off and cut de dorg's rope in two—

"Help! Lemme loose! Nice dorgie, I wouldn't do nothin' to youse!"

Motherly Advice.

"Come into my parlor," said the spider to the fly.

"Don't get conceited by what is said to you," said the fly's mother. "You're no parlor ornament."

Way With a Girl.

"I find I no longer love him."

"Then why not break the engagement?"

"I have an idea that he would like to break it himself."

What She Wanted.

Lady (in shoe store)—These shoes pinch terribly. Haven't you anything larger?

Salesman—You asked for number twos, ma'am. I can give you number threes or number fours, or——

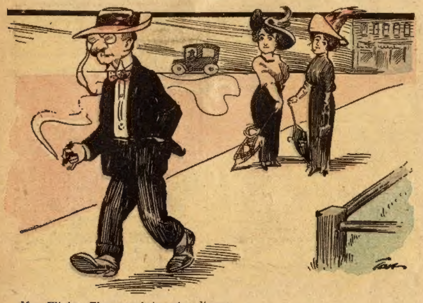
Lady—The idea! I want something larger in number twos.

Father's Remarks.

Young Hopeful—What did papa mean when he said to that man, "You've got a good figure?"

Doting Mamma—He got a good price for some land he sold, my dear.

Young Hopeful (innocently)—Mamma, has the servant girl been selling some land, too?



Mrs. Winks—They say he's got a divorce.
Mrs. Binks—How long did their married happiness last?
Mrs. Winks—Three cooks and a broken furnace.

War.

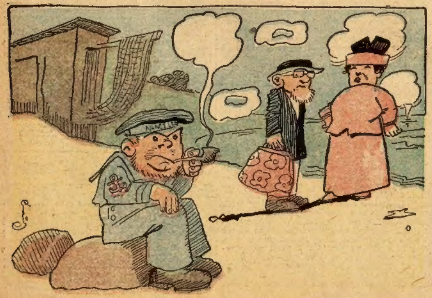
"A war is a fearful thing," said Mr. Dolan.

"It is," replied Mr. Rafferty. "When you see the fierceness of members of the army toward one another the fate of a common enemy must be horrible."

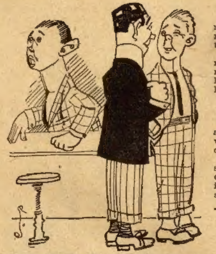
A Bright Husband.

Gabe—Perkins is a pretty bright fellow.

Steve—Yes, he has been married for ten years and his wife has never been able to find out where he hides his change.



Si Freshwater—That's awful smellin' stuff that sailor over yonder's smokin'.
Mrs. Freshwater—Smells like he might be smokin' one o' them sailor's hornpipes I've heard about.



Reginald—Has Billy De Peyster more money than brains?

Arthur—Well, he has on Saturday nights, but Monday morning it's about an even thing.

No Knives.

A busy man who grabs his noon lunch at one of the dairy lunchrooms, where one gets what he wishes at the counter and takes it to a chair to eat, ordered a roast-beef sandwich and a piece of pumpkin pie. The sandwich was damp with gravy—too damp to be handled in his fingers, and he had no knife—only a fork. He went to the counter and asked: "Will you please give me a knife?"

"Ain't got no knives," replied the man at the counter. "Eat your pie with your fork."

Clever Young Man.

"How did Smiggles win Mrs. Willjums over to giving her consent to his marrying her daughter?" asks the young man with the large pipe.

"Met the old lady in the dark hallway and kissed her, then apologized, saying he was sure she was the daughter," explains the young man with the excited socks.—Judge's Library.

How It's Usually Done.

"I've just written a scathing letter denouncing that newspaper, calling it cowardly and spineless," said the indignant citizen.

"Did you sign your name to it?" asked the stranger.

"No—I signed it 'One Who Knows.' I didn't want the eidtor to know who wrote it," he replied.

Knew His Timepiece.

"Hello, Rummel! I hear you had your watch stolen the other day?"

"Yes, but the thief is already caught. Just think, the fool took it to the pawn shop and there they immediately recognized it as mine and detained him."

Parried.

"Miss Kitty, you look nice enough to eat."

"I hope so, Mr. Squinchley; you don't think I'd go out to eat without slicking myself up a little, do you?"

Still Hope.

Winks—Is it true that Mr. Bullion's doctors have given him up?

Jinks—Of course not. He has plenty of money yet.

One Advantage.

"So you have adopted a baby to raise?" we asked our friend. "Well, it may turn out all right, but don't you think you are taking chances?"

"Not a chance," he answers. "No matter how many bad habits the child may develop, my wife can't say he inherits any of them from my side of the house."—Life.

Good Advice.

Ascum—What, in your opinion, is the best business to which a young man can give his attention?

Tellit—His own.

Couldn't Answer.

"By ginger!" roared Blithers, wrathfully, when his son informed him that he had flunked at college. "I'm blest if I know what to say. I——"

"I sympathize with you, dad," said Blithers junior, feelingly. "That's just the way it was with me when they asked those blasted questions at examination!"

Alike.

Willis—Some of those rich fellows seem to think that they can buy their way into Heaven by leaving a million dollars to a church when they die.

Gillis—I don't know but that they stand as much chance as some of these other rich fellows who are trying to get in on the instalment plan of ten cents a Sunday while they're living.

Experienced.

Lawyer—The cross-examination did not seem to worry you. Have you had any previous experience?

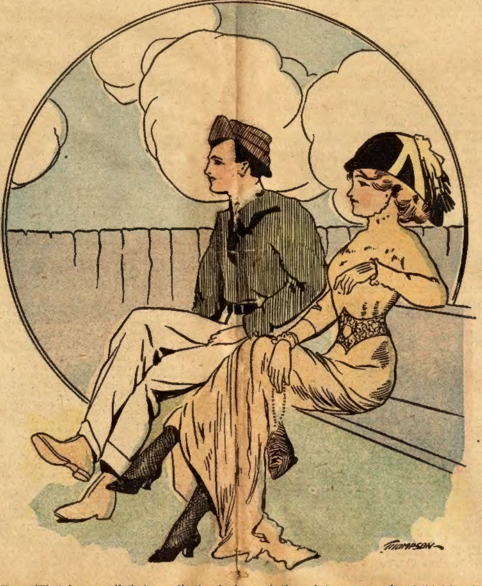
Client—Six children.

Taking His Own Medicine.

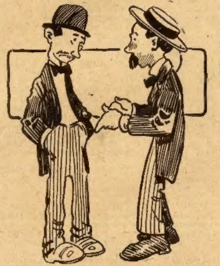
"Did you ever know a doctor to take his own medicine, Slithers?" asked Bildad.

"Did I?" retorted Slithers. "Well, rather. Last time I crossed the Atlantic old Doctor Gidbody prescribed champagne as a cure for my seasickness, and whenever it was time for a dose he'd come around and join me."

BASEBALL TERM.



Vera—What do you call that man that's playing out there between second and third base?
Fred—We call him the comma.
Vera—The comma? What do you call him that for?
Fred—Because he's the short stop—see?



Mr. Meekley—I wouldn't mind it so much if my wife didn't insist on selecting my trousers.

Mr. Homebody—It might be worse. My wife makes mine.

Wrongs of the Poor.

Departures from the old way in things educational come in for hard raps first and last, but not often are they assailed as in this letter, which a glowering boy handed to his teacher the other day:

"Madim you kepe telling my son to breeth with his dierfram. I sepose rich boys and girls al has dierframs but how about when their father only makes 2 dollers a day and theres 4 younger I tel you its enoug to make everybody socialists first its one thing and then its another and now its dierframs its too much."

Stale News.

Mrs. A.—I've heard the terrible news, my dear, and I've called to offer you my sympathy.

Mrs. B.—Sympathy! Terrible news! What do you mean?

Mrs. A.—Why, this about your husband. His deserting you and running off with that chorus girl!

Mrs. B—Good gracious! That was a week ago! He's home again now!

Accurately Informed.

"How is it that woman seems to know so much more about Europe than most of us?" said the frank and outspoken lady.

"Because," replied Miss Cayenne, "she stayed at home and read guidebooks instead of squandering her time in travel."

An Eye for Business.

Fool Woman (in railroad train, on cold day)—Pardon me, sir, but this window sticks. Won't you undertake to open it?

Gentleman—With pleasure, madam. I am an undertaker by profession.

Music By the Band.

Friend (at private ball)—Why have you stationed the orchestra under the stairs?

Experienced Hostess—To drown the noise of the kissing.

The Auto Household.

"Say, Harry!"

"Well?"

"I wish you would crank up this ice cream freezer for me."

Not Sufficiently Exclusive.

"Judge, we wish to protest against these $5 fines."

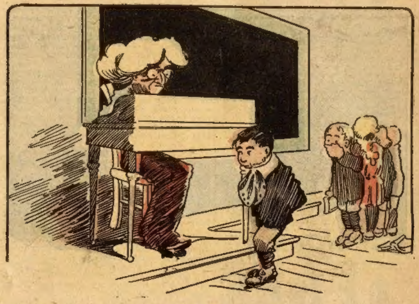
"I consider that very reasonable for reckless motoring."

"It's too reasonable. At that rate anybody can afford to exceed the speed limit."

Conducive to Grace.

She (at the ball)—Have you noticed Mr. Downton's remarkable deftness and grace? No matter how great the crowd, he never bumps against anybody.

He—Y-e-s, I guess he gets his lunches in a stand-up restaurant where every fellow holds his own coffee.



Teacher—Have you been nibbling these lady fingers left on my desk?
Little Willie— No'm. I only just bit the nails.

Wider Field.

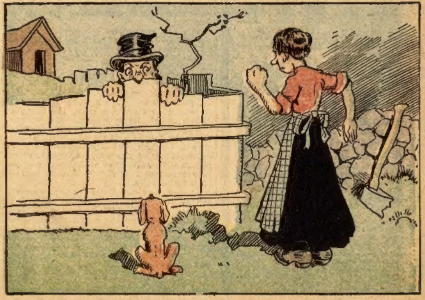
"How is your son, the young doctor, making out?"

"First rate since he learned to adapt himself to circumstances. He started out as a lung specialist, but he's a green apple specialist just now."

What He Was After.

"My husband is never satisfied," said the athlete's wife; "he's going after another record."

"Oh, is that so?" replied the innocent visitor; "I didn't know you had a phonograph."



Artful Askitt—Madam, that cut of punkin pie you gave me last year was worth its weight in gold. I have made a bet that the cut you will give me this year will be worth more.

Mrs. Slicer—You lose! I gave you no pie last year and the only cut you'll get this year will be an uppercut if you don't skip.

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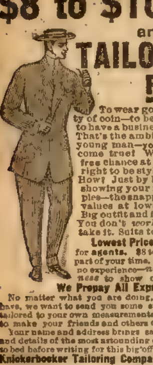

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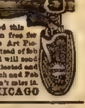

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A Sweetheart's Secret.

(Continued from page two.)

"He said he caught sight of you in Paris. He said he had to look twice to be sure it was you. He told your uncle and—and that was all."

She stopped as suddenly as she had begun.

"I did not know I was on exhibition for Jason Sellers' benefit," I said through my teeth. "I saw him but a few moments ago."

"Where, Roland?"

"He passed the lodge in company with another man. But let us forget him. Where are you staying, Claudia?"

Despite the darkness I could see that she started. I fancied I heard her gasp.

"I don't live very near here," she answered, with an effort. "And I don't come here very often."

"No? John said——"

"Please don't tell me what John said," she interjected. "I don't want to go back to my exile. It's an unpleasant memory, and now after what has happened, I want to forget it."

"I'm sure it was not your fault, Claudia."

"Partly mine," she cried. "Oh, Heaven! I want to forget many things! Vengeance has been taken, for I tell you, Roland, I put up with a great many trials."

I tried to look into her face, and that moment, as if to aid me, a scimiter of lightning cut the heavy clouds and revealed her features. I almost cried aloud. Her face was white and drawn. She had stepped back, but I could see the flashing of her brilliant eyes and almost hear the wild beating of her heart.

I don't know what possessed me at that moment, the inspiration of fiendishness, do doubt, for I suddenly clutched the arm she had withdrawn.

"You say you don't come back to Marshedge often, Claudia?" said I.

"Not often."

"When were you here last?"

Her silence sank to immeasurable depths in my bosom.

"When? What is that to you, Roland?"

Her voice had suddenly changed. From gentleness it had leaped to harshness, and I felt that this was not the Claudia of old.

"If you must know, Roland, I will tell you," she suddenly resumed. "I was here last night. There! don't ask any more questions. The little storm is over. I am going now. Good night," and I heard the vines swept aside, and her form rose for a moment between me and a star that hung over the sea.

CHAPTER IV.

SUSPECTED.

For some moments I stood within the hunting lodge like one in a maze. Claudia's footsteps soon died away on the graveled walk without and the silence grew apace. She was gone! After long years of separation I had seen her for a moment, had touched her hand, but she had vanished, leaving me torn with doubts and still recalling the night of the crime when I had seen her in the road with the lantern. She had baffled my question, one which I now regretted, for I believed that my impetuosity had taken her from me.

For a little while I thought of following her, but, knowing that she was not near, I curbed my impulse and went slowly back to the house. The inquest was to be held on the following day, and I would be summoned to appear before it. Down in the dimly-lighted library was the cold white face of my uncle. I wondered if the door was locked.

The cloud that had spread across my sky seemed to shut out every star. Was it for this I had come back to Marshedge? Why had I not plunged a little more into the scenes beyond the sea, even though I was but a wanderer who at times knew not where to lay his head?

The old house was strangely still. In the silence of my room I thought of the adventures of the night. I thought of Jason Sellers and his unknown companion, I recalled that this man had seen me in Paris, and perhaps what he had said had influenced my uncle against me, which would account for my icy welcome.

Jason Sellers! As I have said, I had no cause to like this man, the haughty nabob of his little world.

At length I opened the door which led to the staircase and looked out. No one was in sight. The light which burned at the foot of the steps threw a weird gleam upward. The stillness burrowed into my heart. I felt it flutter against its human bars.

Almost before I knew it I was at the top of the flight. Something seemed to beckon me to the floor below. I went noiselessly down the steps and laid my hand on the knob of the library door. It yielded instantly and I stood in the presence of the dead.

A fitful light revealed the room in a ghostly manner. I went over to the little table which occupied the middle of it. It was still littered with the last things that had been touched by my uncle's hands—letters, papers, tablets.

The great bookcase which years before had been my delight had a familiar look. I could single out the illustrated books of travel to which I stood indebted for the wanderlust that had sent me abroad. I hated them cordially now.

I wondered if the man beneath the white sheet could solve the dark mystery of his taking off if his lips could speak. Whom had he seen last? Upon what had his gaze rested ere the doom came? My heart went out to him. His strange welcome was forgotten; I thought of him as I had known him years before. I forgave him his coldness when I had expected love.

Suddenly I went forward and stretched out my hands. It was an impulse which I could not beat down. I called to him to speak. I called him by the most endearing names my lips could frame, but from the ghastly covering came no sound.

Carried away by the thoughts of the moment, I bent over and lifted the sheet. At that instant I heard a sound and whirled upon my heel. The door had opened, and there stood John with a face as white as my own. Our eyes met.

John fell back as if to retreat, but my voice stopped him.

"Come in," said I, and I felt that my voice had changed.

"I cannot. I was just making the last rounds, and thought I would see if all was right in here."

His looks belied his words.

"Come in," I repeated, with added sternness. "The dead harms no one, John."

He came forward with a perceptible shiver.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Where are the women, John?"

"I guess they've gone to bed. Poor things! they are greatly flustrated."

"I want to ask you, John, why did Claudia go away from Marshedge. She did not go of her own accord?"

The man's gaze sought the floor.

"She offended the master," he answered, after a moment's thought.

"Offended my uncle? How?"

"It was a love affair."

I started and wondered if John had noticed.

Then Claudia had forgotten me. She had forgotten the little vows we had exchanged by the sea like Enoch Arden and his little Anna. I could not upbraid the girl. If I had remained ere now we should be happy, but I had wrenched what love she had for me from her heart in pursuit of the pleasures beyond the sea. Yet I determined that I would know all.

"A love affair?" I said, with an assumed lightness which must have startled John Groves. "Tell me about it."

"Here?"

"Right here. There is no better place. He will not hear us," and my look wandered to the sheeted dead.

"You see it was this way," pursued John, catching his breath. "Mr. Sellers made love to the girl. He is rich, you know, and the man of these parts. Everybody thought he was just the proper catch for Claudia. Of course, there was a difference in years, but we don't always look at such things."

"No comments please, John! Proceed."

"Well, the master thought it a fine chance for Claudia. He had regarded her as his own, for I've heard him say that Marshedge should be hers some day. The girl was stubborn, however. She declared up and down that Jason Sellers could never be anything to her. It ran on for months, and all the time he was pressing his suit and the master was aiding him. I never saw a girl stand as firm as Claudia did. She met your uncle's arguments at every point. It was diamond cut diamond, sir. We all imagined how it would end and when the wedding day was named——"

I broke the sentence with a little cry.

"The wedding day? Did it get so far along as all that?"

"Yes, sir. I must say that the girl acted foolish, for it was a chance in ten thousand. She seemed to consent at last. Jason Sellers came over and gave her the ring. The master sent away and bought the wedding gowns. Claudia seemed happy for a time, but we noticed before long that she had changed. The old light went out of her eyes and she grew thin and haggard. Then came little spats in the library between her and the master. We could not help but hear them. One night—I shall never forget it—Claudia went away. It was a night of storm, sir, and the waves were rolling over the bar at a tremendous rate. It was the last time she saw the master in the house unless——"

John stopped abruptly and averted his gaze. I waited for him to resume, but his lips did not move.

"I guess that's all," said he, at last, and his voice almost startled me.

"You cannot go yet!" cried I, and I darted forward and clutched the servant's sleeve. You did not finish your last sentence. Why did you not?"

"I don't care to finish it," and there was almost a snap in John's tone.

"Well," I exclaimed, "if you think Claudia came back and did the deed, you need not finish your sentence."

"I don't say she came back, though you know what Phipps said she saw?"

"Yes, a woman in the road with a lantern."

"Phipps is pretty reliable," answered John. "She declares she saw the shawl, too."

"Will the girl tell her story at the inquest?"

"Yes."

(Continued on page thirteen.)

"Fine and Dandy."

He had written his wife that he was getting along "fine and dandy" while she was spending a month with her mother, and he was more than ever convinced that housekeeping was "no trick at all." Her comments on reaching home were along this line:

"Why, Harry Clatterby, didn't you know any better than to fry eggs in the pan of my silver scallop dish? You have ruined the thing! And what under the sun, moon and stars did you mean by putting the eggs in a cut-glass honey dish after they were fried? If I ever in my life— And what have you been wiping the dishes on? My best embroidered tray cloth! And you have been using one of my choicest embroidered initial napkins for a dishcloth! Look at it! As black as my shoe!

"And what have you been trying to cook in my chafing dish? Beefsteak? The idea of frying beefsteak in a silver chafing dish! Why didn't you use the solid silver bread tray? Looks as if you had put the beefsteak in that after you had fried it! And here is my handsome, cut-glass celery dish full of cold and greasy fried potatoes! And what is this on the diningroom rug? A grease spot as big as a meat platter! You let a plate of hot steak fall on it? My soul!

"And don't you know any better than to tie a twenty dollar lace curtain into a knot like they sometimes tie the tail of a horse? Nice way to use a curtain! And couldn't you do a little simple cooking without getting ashes strewn six feet around the range? Well, if this is what you call getting along 'fine and dandy,' I wonder how things would have looked if you hadn't gotten along very well?"—Judge.

* * *

Doomed to Work.

Their oldest was a boy. Their second came a year later, but it was a girl. The third and the fourth were also of the female gender; and, by this time, the oldest was not only old enough to sit up and take notice, but strong enough to do the chores about the house. He longed for a brother, but the brother, like the message in the song, never came.

That oldest child was 10 last week. The house was rather upset in anticipation of something or other; the weather was unsettled, and the furnace required care. At that juncture, there appeared a beaming nurse unto our 10-year-old hero.

"What do you think you've got?" she cried.

"A baby brother?" he gasped.

"No—it's a baby sister!"

"Gosh!" he groaned, turning away and wiping his eyes on his sleeve, "must I always sift these ashes!"

* * *

The Ghost.

It was a haunted house, and the famous lawyer had been sitting up to catch the ghost.

At twelve o'clock precisely the ghost appeared.

"I am thy father's spirit," it began, but the lawyer interrupted him.

"I don't care who you are!" he said. "You are trespassing on inclosed property."

"But I've been here for three hundred years," pleaded the ghost.

"I don't care. You can't stay here. I'll get an ejectment order tomorrow."

"Won't you allow me to burn blue lights on the battlements?"

"Certainly not. If you do I'll have you arrested on suspicion."

"Well, may I hover in the air outside your window?"

"No. If you do I'll have you arrested for wandering around without any visible means of support!"

So the ghost sadly vanished and hasn't been seen since.

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At Dead of Night.

(Continued from page four.)

Cassie must be put upon the stand, and the facts connected with that strange visit to her uncle on the preceding night be made plain. He knew where he would be apt either to find her, or at the least learn where the actress lived, while playing in New York.

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Perhaps Blair was human in that he saved the most alluring clew until the last. It was difficult for him to imagine that a young woman like Cassie could have committed such an atrocious deed as the murder of Paternoster must be reckoned. Even in the heat of temper it would be next to impossible that she could have actually choked a man who had never been reckoned a weakling; and then to tell her lover, Willis Strang: "It was a hard job, Willis, but I succeeded. It's all right!"

Nevertheless, as Cassie was believed to be the one who would profit by the death of her uncle above all others; and as she had made him such a surreptitious visit on the night of the tragedy, she must be seen, and influenced to confess to the truth.

When he reached the well-known music hall, where, under her stage name, she was appearing nightly, as well as at two matinees a week, Blair began to ask questions. He soon found that the only way to learn where an actress is stopping is to lubricate the palm of some employe whose business it is to run between the manager of the show and his stars, carrying urgent messages. The Mercury in this case proved to be a bright-eyed boy, and knowing just how to go about his business the detective soon made friends with this imaginative youth.

He concocted an amazing tale concerning some wonderful good fortune which had lately befallen the lady, though she herself did not dream of such a thing as yet, and how he was selected as the one to bear the joyful tidings to her personally. But perhaps it was the gold coin he managed to slip into the hand of the boy that influenced him most of all. Little Blair cared what turned the trick, so long as his aim was attained.

Armed with the directions for finding the young woman, if so be she chanced to be in, which was quite likely at this early hour, he started off. Just as he reached the hotel he discovered a young man whom he recognized as Willis Strang, the aviator, standing close beside the open door of a taxicab; and even as he looked he saw a veiled figure flutter forth, and enter the vehicle, showing all the signs of fear lest her flight be discovered!

The continuation of this interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

* * *

A Sweetheart's Secret.

(Continued from page twelve.)

Something seemed to sink like a plummet in my breast.

"Phipps is a dreamer!" cried I. "She looks like one who becomes daffy over fiction."

"But Mossy Phipps is clear-headed."

"We'll take Phipps and her Titian locks out of the running," said I. "What do you think, John?"

I saw the man's lips curl jealously.

"I like Phipps," said he, with a flash of resentment in his eyes. "She doesn't deserve your harsh words, and I wish you would withdraw them. I'm engaged to Phipps and I needn't make a secret of it to any one."

"Oh, well, consider my last remark withdrawn. I don't care what your sweetheart saw down in the marsh road. Claudia never took that old man's life."

"Eh?"

John Groves was showing his teeth in a half-repulsive grin.

"I believe she didn't kill him," said he. "But she was on the premises that night. You were in the house, and the master didn't give you the welcome you expected. If I were you, Mr. Roland Marshall, I don't believe I would remain for the inquest."

I know my face went white with rage. I could feel the tide of passion coursing through my whole frame. John Groves now stood at the door with his hand on the knob.

"What do you insinuate, you brute?" I flashed, taking one impulsive stride toward him. "Tell me what you mean, wretch!"

"You'll discover tomorrow, if you remain," came back in startling tones. "Claudia didn't kill your uncle. I implore you for your own good to leave Marshedge between now and daylight!"

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

* * *

Comparison.

"That was a tempestuous outburst of oratory our friend indulged in," said one statesman.

"Tempestuous is the word," replied the other. "Whenever he makes a speech it makes me think of a cyclone that has somehow learned to articulate."

Financiering.

A small boy was given a penny to spend. Now, although his stomach craved a lollypop, he also wished a banana he had seen on a fruit stand at the corner. He preferred, of the two, the fruit.

"How much is them bananas?" he asked.

"Six for five cents, or a penny apiece."

"Six for five? Well," the youngster said wistfully, "gimme six."

The fruiterer counted out a half dozen and handed them over.

"A penny apiece?" questioned the boy, taking them.

The man nodded. So the boy counted out five bananas and gave them back. "There's your five cents' worth," he said. "I don't want 'em."

Before the merchant quite saw the value of the lad's act, the boy was on his way to the candy store, a banana in one hand and his cent in the other.—Judge.

* * *

Star Gazing No Excuse.

His wife was one too many for Mr. Brown, but, nevertheless, he perserved in his efforts to get an occasional night at the club.

"My dear," he remarked the other day, "only now do I realize how imperfect I am in my knowledge, how lacking in learning you find me."

The matter being put to the vote, Mrs. Brown agreed unanimously.

"No man," continued Mr. Brown, "ought to assume that his education is finished. As for myself, I am going to forge ahead and take up the study of astronomy."

The look in Mrs. Brown's eye became more eagle-like than ever.

Her voice assumed a cold, hard tone. Her back stiffened.

"Benjamin Brown," she thundered, "you must try again. That excuse for staying out late at night won't do!"

* * *

Strange Wedding Gifts.

No one ever received a more curious consignment of wedding presents than the lion trainer, Bidel. "We spent our honeymoon at Lyons," he once told a friend, "and we had some queer presents from the ordinary point of view, as all my friends were anxious to give 'something useful.' Among other gifts were three boa constrictors and five alligators. I shall never forget how annoyed I was and how frightened my wife was when, during the night, two of the alligators broke out of their boxes in our bedroom and began exploring. I could not find the matches and my wife and I remained on top of the bed canopy till morning. Luckily my wife did not think of the thing that was worrying me. I was deadly afraid that the alligators would waken up the boa constrictors."

* * *

Irresistible.

A New York broker was praising, apropos of his probable return to Wall street, Charles W. Morse's ability as a money raiser.

"They tell a story about Morse," he chuckled. "Morse went to a millionaire one day and said:

"'Lend me three millions. I must have three millions for that new deal of mine.'

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"'Is that all?' said Morse. 'Well, hand it over, then—you can owe me the other million.'"

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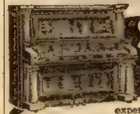

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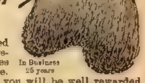

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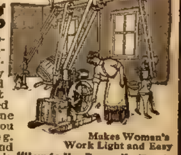

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Politics might not be so bad but for some of the people in it.

It requires a lot of personal magnetism to start things your way.

A girl who knows nothing of archery may be able to draw a beau.

Many reputations blow up when a political campaign is in full blast.

It's well to pay as you go and also to save enough to pay your way back.

Early to bed and early to rise to many a man would prove a surprise.

What a monotonous old world this would be if everybody thought as we do!

Some men are so stingy they won't even tell a joke at their own expense.

The most successful farmers seem to be acting as editors of agricultural papers.

If a girl marries a man for his money she never lets him forget her willingness to help spend it.

When a man begins to go down hill he finds that the law of gravitation and the encouragement of his friends help some.

It takes a woman to boast of her outing at a fashionable summer resort after a three weeks' sojourn at a farmhouse.

Many a father is willing to let his daughter marry the man of her choice without a murmur because she has the piano habit.

Few women would enjoy going anywhere if it wasn't for the pleasure they get out of talking about it after they return home.

The Winning of Mary.

(Continued from page six.)

had an easy victory, or that I had given in while able to handle a weapon.

Mary was as white as a ghost; but she tried bravely to assist me, though her little hand trembled as it lifted a rifle, and I saw a tear roll down her cheek as if dreams she had allowed herself to indulge in, had in this dread moment vanished like smoke.

This dramatic story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It only costs $1.00 a year, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Times Have Changed.

At a recent dinner of Kansas club women Mrs. Gertrude Bullin Hollister, a formerly-of-Kansas woman, then president of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs, was present and responded to a toast, "Home Folks." To illustrate the impression she received by her visit to her native State, she told the following story:

"'I did not have a very nice time when I first went to Annabel's,' little Madge announced on her return home. 'Annabel was cross as could be; she would not let me play with her doll or touch one of her playthings.'

"'Well,' replied the mother, 'when I was your age, had I gone to see a little friend and she would not let me touch her playthings, I should have gone straight home.'

"'But times have changed since you were a little girl, mother,' Madge replied after due reflection. 'I slapped her face and stayed.'"

* * *

One on the Scotch.

At the recent dinner given by Andrew Carnegie an eminent lawyer, seated half-way down the table, was deeply immersed in conversation with his neighbor when the host opened up the subject of the British coinage system and showed signs of wishing undivided attention.

"Every other civilized nation," he declaimed, "has the decimal system, while England adheres to the absurd and cumbrous table of pounds, shillings and pence." Rap-rap-rap.

The raps were for the lawyer, who remained absorbed in his own conversation. "And even farthings," continued the ironmaster. "Is there anything else in finance so ridiculous as the farthing?" Rap-rap.

The lawyer glanced around somewhat surprised.

"Judge G——," Mr. Carnegie called out, "why do the British continue their coinage of farthings?"

"To enable the Scotch to practice benevolence, Mr. Carnegie," returned the lawyer.

* * *

Reassured.

Business was brisk in the village store when the stranger entered.

"Any of you drive up in a trap?" he asked casually.

"Yes. I did," said Farmer Turmups disinterestedly. "Why?"

"Gray horse, and an old lady inside?"

"Yes, that's right! But——"

"Can she manage him all right?" said the stranger.

"I should think so," replied Turmups. "Why, my wife's druv that old horse ever since he was a three-year-old!"

"That's all right, then," said the stranger. "I merely asked because the gray has just gone down the street like a mad bull, and the old lady's hanging on to the back of the trap, screaming 'murder!' Still, if she can manage him there's nothing to get excited about. How's the price of 'taters down your way?"

* * *

To Develop the Bust

To Beauty Editor: I am so ashamed of my thin bust that I want to ask you if there is any harmless way to develop it. My hips and the rest of my body are right for the present styles and I do not want them any larger, but my bust is so flat that I would try anything that gave hope of even three or four more inches development. MARY S.

The only thing I know of that will develop the bust without increasing the size of the hips, or without putting on flesh where not needed, is a prescription put up by The Dr. Kelly Co., especially for small and undeveloped breasts. It is the discovery of a woman physician whose practice was largely among her own sex and in most cases increases the bust measure four to six inches in a month. Send 10c to the Dr. Kelly Co., Dept. 92 H B, Buffalo, N. Y., and they will send you a trial package of the treatment without charge. This is said to be of great value in cases of arrested development of the bust and will give a full, beautiful form without anyone knowing that the treatment was used.

Many mothers have told me that after the baby had been weaned, the breasts became flabby and shrunken, but the use of Dr. Kelly's prescription made them full and firm. Do not use pads or bust forms, as they never look natural and have a bad effect upon the general health. Neither would I recommend ordinary flesh builders or tonics, as they increase the hips and limbs and with the present styles the form should be slender everywhere except a generously developed bust.—Advertisement.

WANT ADS

Want and Classified Advertising not less than 14 words accepted for insertion in the Ledger and Blade at 25 cents per word.

AUTOMOBILES

AUTOMOBILE Marine Motorcycle Cylinders reground, new pistons and rings fitted. Makes engine equal to new. Write for particulars. Cast Iron Brazing Co., Manchester, N H

AGENTS WANTED

$250.00 paid for distributing 2,000 free packages Perfumed Soap Powder in your town. Men or women. No money required. B. W. Ward & Co., 1770 Berteau ave., Chicago.

SOAP AGENTS—"Make more money" selling largest line of Toilet Articles, Extracts, Spices and Household Necessities: Celebrated Linro Products—140 articles; Freight Paid; big commissions for you; handsome premiums for your customers; Exclusive Territory; sample case furnished; free catalogues. Linro Co., 130 Linro Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

FIVE dollars per hundred for collecting names and addresses. All or spare time, stamp for particulars. Penn Sales Co., Darby, Penna.

AGENTS—One cent invested in a postal card will bring you a $35 to $60 a week proposition. American Aluminum Co., Div. 717 Lemont, Ill.

AGENTS on salary or commission. The greatest agent's seller ever produced; every user of pen and ink buys it on sight; 200 to 500 per cent profit; one agent's sales amounted to $620 in six days; another $32 in two hours. Monroe Mfg. Co., X 86, La Crosse, Wis.

STARK BRO'S, Louisiana, Mo., Big Idea in tree selling. Best terms known to nursery world. Box 80

WANTED Agents to sell rich looking imported 36x68 rugs. $1 each. R. H. Carter, Milan, Tenn., sold 115 in four days. His profit $51. You can do as well. Write for sample offer and unique selling plan. Exclusive territory. Condon, Importer, Stonington, Maine.

$3.00 to $5.00 per day selling our family medicines. We trust you and help you build a business all your own Free samples. Write today. Ecktone Co., St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS—Men and Women; sell guaranteed Hosiery. Credit plan helps you. The line that repeats. Exclusive agency to hustlers. Dept. B 1., Lehr Mfg. Co., Denver, Colo

SALESLADIES WANTED

LADY Shoe Representative—Establish a shoe business among the women in your town at our expense. No store proposition, no worry. We continuously help you secure orders. Write for particulars today. Greeley Shoe Company, Duncan street, Haverhill, Mass.

SALESLADY in every town for high grade Corsets, not sold in stores. Unexcelled Opportunity. References. Wade Co., Station L., New York

FARMS FOR SALE

FRUIT LANDS—Beautiful Kootenay Valley, B. C., 68 acres, subdivided into 2 4-acre tracts, 11 of 5-acres and one of 25 acres. The 25-acre tract is improved, has dwelling, stable, ice-house, etc. All for a limited time at the low price of $6,000. Adjoining land held at $200 per acre. Will cost you nothing to write and investigate. Owner forced to realize thereon. ¼ cash, balance easy terms. Only six hours from Spokane, Wash. Pure water, ideal climate and very low taxes. Address D. B. Dulmage, Morgan Park, Illinois.

MUSICAL.

WELL-KNOWN Composer Wants Song-Poems, at once. Chance for successful writers to make a fortune! All poems not available will be returned promptly. The Len Fleming Co., Suite 504 Gaiety Theater Bldg., New York City.

MISCELLANEOUS

$100.00 Typewriters $9.95-19.85, Sold and rented. $300.00 Motorcycles $35.00. Phonographs, $9.75. Records, $0.15. Payments, Knight's, 201 12th, St. Louis, Mo.

WHAT ALICE DID, illustrated, 10c. Photographs, Books, Gentlemen like. List 2c. Ord, Long Beach, Calif.

NEW book "Kate," 10c. Catalog books and den pictures free. Atoz Co., A-1, West Jefferson, Ohio.

BARGAIN—Three fine neckties $1. Gold plated Pin free. Ties and pin retail at $2.50. This offer is for short time only. Send $1 at once. Money refunded by return mail if not satisfied. Name colors desired. W. C. Watkins, Parnassus, Pa.

BROTHER accidentally discovered root will cure both tobacco habit and indigestion; gladly send particulars. R. O. Stokes, Mohawk, Florida

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

$1.00 a Week will start you in a big money-making mail order business—with the best line—in spare time. Particulars free. Nadico Co., 1665 Belmont ave., Chicago, Ill.

HELP WANTED

WANTED—Man in every town to manage Cleaning, Dyeing, Pressing business; big pay; experience unnecessary. Sourbeer System, D-2, Parsons, Kansas.

WANTED—Men and Women—For Government positions. $80.00 month. Annual vacations. Short hours. No "layoffs." Common education sufficient. Over 12,000 appointments coming. Influence unnecessary. Farmers eligible. Franklin Institute, Dep't 31, Rochester, N. Y.

MEN WANTED—Secret Service. Thousands of Dollars Yearly. We are Trainers, Informers, etc. Write: Secret Service, Martinsville, Virginia.

ACTIVE Man to represent us in every town Steady income to right man. No canvassing. Will not interfere with present employment. Ruggles & Mee, Box 122, Sayre, Pa.

LEARN the Barber Trade. Few weeks completes. We control many excellent positions. Tools given. Branches in all leading cities. For information regarding any one, write Dept. 10, Moler College, 738 South Wabash ave., Chicago, Ill.

GOVERNMENT Post Office Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Write for Booklet B. Patterson Civil Service School, Rochester, N. Y

WANTED—Active man in each locality. To join this Society. And introduce our Memberships Sick, accident, death benefits. All or spare time. Make $[illegible] to $500 a month. Write. Box CK-293, Covington, Ky.

SOUND men, 20 to 40 years old, wanted at once in every State for Electric Railway Motormen and Conductors; $60 to $100 month; no experience necessary; fine opportunity; no strike; write immediately for application blank. Address Mgr. Z., 552 Dwight Building, Kansas City, Missouri.

WANTED—Reliable man in each locality who is interested in lodge work, either as president, secretary, deputy or member. If you know something about lodge work, how it is started, carried on, etc., and would like to turn that knowledge into some good money during your spare moments, write immediately to Box G-409, Cincinnati, Ohio

GOVERNMENT farmers wanted. $60 monthly. Free living quarters. Write today. Ozment [illegible]

WANTED. Post Office Clerks, City and Rural Carriers. Thousands needed. Examinations soon. Trial Examination Free. Write Today. Ozment, K. St Louis

FEMALE HELP WANTED

LADIES can make shields at home; $10 per 100; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Particulars for stamped addressed envelope. Eureka Co., Dept. 17, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

YOU can write a short story. Beginners learn thoroughly under our perfect method. We help those who want to sell their stories. Write for particulars. School of Short-Story Writing, 77 Page Bldg., Chicago.

PATENTS

PATENTS That Protect—Patent your ideas; they may bring you wealth; 64 page book free. Fitz Gerald & Co., Dept. W, Washington, D. C.

PROTECTIVE Patents procured promptly Our books telling how to obtain and realize therefrom sent on request. Write today Trade Marks Registered. Beeler & Robb, 248 Southern Bldg., Washington, D. C.

PERSONAL

ANYONE desiring marriage is invited to write, Mrs. Hyde, 2676 Mission st., San Francisco, Cal

MARRY—Best plan on earth, sent free photo of every lady member. The Pilot, Dept. 674, Marshall, Mich.

LOVINE never fails. Every package guaranteed. Either sex 10c. Two packages sealed 20c. Union, Box 100N, Palatine, Illinois.

MARRY Rich—Matrimonial paper of highest character, containing hundreds of photos and descriptions of marriageable people with means; mailed free, sealed; either sex. Write. One may be your ideal. Standard Cor. Club, Box 607, Grays Lake, Illinois.

MARRY—Photos, descriptions and P. O. addresses of pretty, rich ladies and gents, want to marry, free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

MARRIAGE paper free; best published for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency 55, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

MARRY, thousands wealthy, anxious for early marriage, descriptions free. Confidential, 268 Market, San Francisco, Calif.

MARRIAGE Paper; Highest Character; Incorporated; 16th year; 8,000 members; paper sealed; send 10c. B. W. Love, Box 1600, Denver, Colo.

He Ought to Know.

He was a country physician, a kindly man, who loved his patients. No night was ever too cold for him to get out of bed and ride ten or twelve miles to the bedside of a sick man. The whole countryside loved him and trusted him, and many families rose up every day to call him blessed.

But at last there came a rift in the lute, a note of discord in the general song of the doctor's praises.

A woman became very ill and her little daughter was standing at the front fate. A kindly neighbor came by with an inquiry about the mother's health.

"She's going to die," said the little girl, suddenly.

"How do you know?" asked the neighbor.

"That old doctor says so," replied the child angrily. "And I guess he's right. He knows what he gave her."

* * *

The Last Word.

The angry mother returns home from a shopping tour downtown to find Tommy has broken into the jam closet, teased his little sister till she cried, smashed a window pane with his top, tied a tin can on the tail of the dog next door, and then wound up further depredations by tracking the parlor carpet with his muddy boots. "You young villain, I'm going to whip you till you can't sit down. (Grabs hold him.) "Now, what have you got to say for yourself?"

Tommy—Aw, say, ma, this looks like a frame-up.

* * *

J. P.

Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. HOOD CO., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (2)

* * *

U. S. GOVERNMENT POSITIONS OPEN.

All interested should write to Franklin Institute, Dept. E 78, Rochester, N. Y., for free list of Government positions open.

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

What She Wanted.

Jim Mann was on his way back from Chicago, and couldn't help hearing the conversation of the couple in the section right in front him. They looked like newly married folks, but were not on their honeymoon, as Mann learned by deduction. The woman laid down a newspaper she had been reading and said to her husband:

"Do you know, I wish I had one of those affinities. Oh, I think it would be just gr-a-n-d to sit on a rock with somebody and have him rave about the incomparable golden color of my hair, and tell me that my eyes were the most beautiful in the whole world, and——"

"Uh, huh," said the husband, yawning.

"And that the delicate pink of my cheeks had been painted there by the angels, and that he couldn't live without me. Oh, oh, I think an affinity like that would be——"

"'Tisn't an affinity you want," interrupted her husband, "What you seem to want is a plain, old-fashioned liar."

❦

A Mean Man.

"Talking about meanness," said an old son of the soil who was holding a pint of beer in a chair by the stove, "you should have known old Jones that used to keep a farm out near here.

"Twenty years ago, it was on New Years' Day, that his son went out with a tin pail to milk a cow. Somehow or other both the lad and bucket disappeared mysteriously.

"No more was heard of him till he wandered back home, ten years after, as rich as a millionaire, and loaded the old man with gold and diamond pins and new clothes and gave him a couple of thousand dollars for a birthday present.

"And do you think he was grateful? Never a bit. 'George,' says he, 'what have you done with the bucket?'

"And George left home again, wondering whether his father was the meanest man in the world or whether that distinction was still held by the fellow who used a wart on the back of his neck for a collar stud."

❦

His Isolation.

"I was running out a timber tract in the wilds of Maine one time," said a New York surveyor, "and my tramp had taken me into the depth of the wilderness ten miles from camp. The camp was 100 miles from the nearest railroad station. Presently, to my surprise, I heard the sound of an ax. I followed the sound and found a busy woodsman at work. He had cleared the timber away for a few rods about, and on that space had put up a snug log cabin. All the rest, on every side, was the profound, almost untrodden wilderness. The man stopped his work and greeted me pleasantly.

"'And where did you come from?' he asked.

"I told him I had come from New York.

"'Live there?' said he.

"I replied that I lived there. He gazed at me as if amazed, and by and by said: 'Well, well! Gosh! I don't see how you can bear to live so far away.'

"And as I came away I could almost feel his look of pity for me in my isolated New York domicile."

❦

Caught.

Wife—Did you post that letter I gave you?

Hubby—Yes, dear; I carried it in my hand so I couldn't forget it, and I dropped it in the first box. I remember, because——

Wife—There, dear, that will do. I didn't give you any letter to post.

❦

'Well Trained.

A precocious child, who had been attending one of the public kindergartens, fell from a ladder. Her mother caught her up from the ground in terror, exclaiming:

"Oh, darling! how did you fall?"

"Vertically," replied the child, without a second's hesitation.

❦

Prepared for the Worst.

When Sam Jackson, now the publisher of the Oregon Journal, at Portland, was editor of the East Oregonian, of Pendleton, he went down to Portland one day, and met a cousin from Virginia named Norman. He invited Norman to go up to Pendleton with him for a visit. Norman consented. So Sam wired to Mrs. Jackson:

"Coming on the early morning train—Norman with me." They got to Pendleton about 3 a. m., and went up to the Jackson house. The house was lighted. Jackson was surprised to find Mrs. Jackson waiting for him, and was further surprised to observe a rather stern expression on her face.

She met him at the door.

"Where's the woman?" she asked acidly.

"What woman?" spluttered Jackson.

"This woman you refer to in this message," said Mrs. Jackson, handing her astonished husband the telegram he had sent.

It read: "Coming in the morning—woman with me!"

❦

A Quick-Witted "Lassie."

A Salvation Army officer was taking up a collection on the street. One man was heard to say, as he dropped in a dime, "Here's 10 cents for the grafters."

"You don't believe there's any graft in the Salvation Army?" quickly rejoined the woman.

"How do you know?" the man asked her.

"Because you would be in the army yourself if you did," was the sharp reply. And the man had the grace—and the humor—to laugh.

❦

Not Free.

It was his first visit to this country, and he was anxious to see as much of it as possible in a short time. In a brief visit to the South he met an aged negro who had been a slave.

"How interesting," he remarked. "And after the war you had your freedom?"

The old man looked at him half sadly, half sheepishly, shook his woolly head and said: "No sah. Ah didn't git no freedom—Ah done was married."

❦

Quite True.

"I visited a spiritualistic medium the other day."

"And did she tell you anything that was true?"

"Yes, one thing in particular—that I spent my money foolishly."

His Worry.

"Clarence," said the American heiress hesitatingly, "I think that you should be told at once how my father made his money. Our business men in this country have methods which to one of your pure soul, whose motto is 'Noblesse oblige,' cannot but——"

"Cease, Mamie, cease," said the young lord reassuringly, "tell me no more. However he made his millions I can forgive, for your sake. But—er—has he still got them all right?"

❦

He Had None.

He—Don't you like to eat a peach with the skin on?

She—No; it's like kissing a man with a mustache—er—I think I hear mother calling.

FAMILY RUNT

Kansas Man Says Coffee Made Him That.

"Coffee has been used in our family of eleven—father, mother, five sons and four daughters—for thirty years: I am the eldest of the boys and have always been considered the runt of the family and a coffee toper.

"I continued to drink it for years until I grew to be a man, and then I found I had stomach trouble, nervous headaches, poor circulation, was unable to do a full day's work, took medicine for this, that, and the other thing, without the least benefit. In fact I only weighed 116 when I was 28.

"Then I changed from coffee to Postum, being the first one in our family to do so. I noticed, as did the rest of the family, that I was surely gaining strength and flesh. Shortly after I was visiting my cousin, who said, 'You look so much better—you're getting fat.'

"At breakfast his wife passed me a cup of coffee, as she knew I was always such a coffee drinker, but I said, 'No, thank you.'

"'What!' said my cousin, 'you quit coffee? What do you drink?'

"Postum,' I said, 'or water, and I am well.' They did not know what Postum was, but my cousin had stomach trouble and could not sleep at night from drinking coffee three times a day. He was glad to learn about Postum but said he never knew coffee hurt anyone." (Tea is just as injurious as coffee because it contains *caffeine*, the same drug found in coffee.)

"After understanding my condition and how I got well he knew what to do for himself. He discovered that coffee was the cause of his trouble as he never used tobacco or anything else of the kind. You should see the change in him now. We both believe that if persons who suffer from coffee drinking would stop and use Postum they could build back to health and happiness." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"There's a reason." Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

SPEAR Will Trust You Wherever You Live—Write For His Free Catalog

A Personal Word

The rich and prosperous class can always command the luxuries of life, but the average homelover needs the Spear System of Credit to the Nation. I want 1,000,000 families to say of me:—"He helped us to furnish and beautify our homes." I ask for no higher tribute to my life's work. Write for my Free Catalog.
Spear
of
Pittsburgh

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No matter in what part of the United States you live, you can buy everything for the home from us on credit and on easy payments to suit your convenience. Just mail us your name and address for one of our Mammoth Homefurnishing Catalogs, containing illustrations from photographs and full descriptions of thousands of articles in

Furniture, Carpets, Rugs, Stoves, Ranges, Refrigerators, Clocks, Dishes, Sewing Machines, Washing Machines, Lace Curtains, Mattresses and Bedding, Silver, Springs, Go-Carts,

We offer you a vastly larger and better stock than even the big city stores—all sold by us on long time, open account, easy credit terms and you can make your selections *right at home with your family at your elbow.*

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Your credit is good with us. Why not use it? It is extended to honest people, *everywhere*, regardless of their income. Under our liberal open account, easy payment plan you can have every possible advantage in buying possessed by the most favored shopper in the city stores.

Pay When Convenient

You need not deny yourself anything on account of the lack of ready cash. Select what you want from our Catalog, make a small cash payment and pay a little each month.

Our Prices Are The Lowest

While our credit terms are the most liberal in the country, yet our prices are the lowest. This is because we buy goods in such vast quantities that we secure rock bottom prices and with our immense volume of sales we can afford to accept just one small added profit from each sale. We allow no one to undersell us. Just get our prices!

Take A Month To Decide

Anything you order from our Bargain Catalog or selct from this advertisement, will be shipped *on approval.* Keep the goods 30 days. If not fully satisfied to buy, send the goods back at our expense and we will refund all the money you have paid us.

"Steinway Special" Sewing Machine

Made with beautifully finished solid oak case—dust proof head case, heavy ball-bearing iron stand, and fitted with high arm automatic lift head. Full set attachments and accessories. Up-to-date and just like this illustration.

Fill Out Spear's Coupon

In sending for our catalog you will find it convenient to fill out the coupon in lower left hand corner of this advertisement with your name and address. Enclose it in an envelope and mail it to us, or a postal will do.

Colonial Library Table

Large, heavy, 28x42 inches, made of American quartered oak, fitted with drawer. Splendid Colonial design, highly glossed finish—guaranteed to give satisfaction. *No. C. W. 3774—Price $8.95.*

"Iceland" Refrigerators

are all made of hard wood, with finest piano finish. White enamel lined, and fitted with patent sanitary traps. Guaranteed to be most economical as ice savers, and to give best possible satisfaction. Mineral wool lined and finest nickel trimmings. Prices from *$9.60* up, on easy credit terms, *30 Days' Free Trial.*

Write For Spear's Free Catalog Today

SPEAR & CO.
Dept. 84 Pittsburgh, Pa.

A high color Brussels Rug, red rose design, with either green or tan ground. No. C.W. 4602, 9x12 size. Price, $11.95, $1.50 Cash, 75c per Month.

Spear's Semi-Collapsible Go-Cart

No. C.W. 118 75c Cash 50c per Month

Full size frame, best steel, nicely finished. Leatherette covering, dark green. 10 in. wheels, heavy rubber tires. When folded runs on two wheels $4.75

Guaranteed 10 Years Price $18.45

No. C.W. 3210 Terms $3.00 Cash, $1.25 per Month

No. C. W. 3774, Terms $1.50 Cash, 75c per Month

See our Catalog for Sizes and Prices of Refrigerators.

SPEAR & CO.,
Dept. 84
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Please send me, free, without obligation of any kind on my part, a copy of your Mammoth Bargain Catalog.

NAME..............................

ADDRESS..............................

....

Tailoring Salesmen WANTED

We want live, energetic hustlers, men who can make good; who are ambitious to start in a business of their own. No canvassing; no experience required; no capital necessary. We furnish everything to start. **Hundreds are making from $100 to $200 per month and expenses.** We guarantee absolute satisfaction and take all the risk. We are one of the largest woolen mills in the country and positively have the only up-to-date, high-quality, low-priced tailoring on the market.

A great many of our men are making from $25 to $50 Every Week

We furnish a complete agents' outfit, consisting of **large sample book** (not a folder), **order blanks, tape measures, advertising matter**—in fact everything essential to the conducting of a high-class tailoring business.

Write today for this big outfit It is sent express prepaid. Drop a postal and say *"Send me your agents' outfit."* We will start you at once on the road to Success. Be sure and write today.

DANIEL WOOLEN MILLS, Dept A, 300 Green St., Chicago

CASH OR CREDIT

Catalogue FREE.

ONLY $10.00

Cash, balance $5 per month, buys this 3-year-guaranteed buggy. Buggies $29.50 up; Surries $45.00 up; Farm Wagons $40.00 up. We trust honest people located in all parts of the world.

Write For FREE CATALOGUE.

Century Manufacturing Co.,
Dep't 564 East St. Louis, Ill.

STYLISH BRACELET FREE

Made from heavy round tubing Not wire. Finished in 14k gold plate. The very latest bracelet and imitation of expensive model. Send us your subscription for one year to Everyday Life at 25c and send 5c extra for postage and packing, or 30c in all, and we will send you this fine bracelet free. New patent snap for opening and closing.

EVERYDAY LIFE, DEPT. B 51, CHICAGO.

NERVOUS
DESPONDENT
WOMEN

Find Relief in Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound —Their Own Statements So Testify.

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Our Boys' Corner

The Stolen Million

Or, JED BRONSON'S LEGACY

By Captain Jack Judson

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CHAPTER I.

THE BIRD IN THE BUSH.

IT'S a dream, Jed."

"Anyway, it is a very surprising one," was the reply and Jed Bronson picked up the letter which he had just laid down and perused it again.

Ned Suffolk, his chum, looked at him and waited till he spoke once more. "I can't get it through my noggin," resumed Jed with a smile. "It all seems so startling. That a man whom I once favored in a small way should leave me all his fortune! I say, Ned——"

"Now, don't get excited. I've read of just such things, but I never more than half believed them."

"But this letter seems all right. It comes from a firm of lawyers who assure me that they are the executors of Mr. Dannemar's will, and I remember telling Mr. Dannemar who I was and where I lived and he evidently made a note of it."

"Just as a thoughtful man would do," commented Ned. "Don't you think we would better consult some lawyer and get his opinion?"

"But the letter says," and Jed looked over the typewritten sheet again, "that all I have to do is to get a letter of identification and come on as soon as possible. Fortunately the folks are away, to be gone at least two months, and I have all that time on my hands. I would like to surprise them when they come back by showing them that I was worth a cool million."

"That's an enormous sum of money for a man to give a boy who once assisted him when he fainted in New York."

"I know it is, but maybe he had no relatives and didn't want his wealth to be scattered."

"Read that letter again," said Ned. "I want to get a good hold on it."

With pleasure-lit eyes Jed turned to the sheet before him and in a clear voice read as follows:

"Office of Judd & Jerrold, Attys.
"New York, N. Y., May 10th, 1910.
"Jed Bronson,
"Rosedale, Pa.
"Dear Sir:—

"We take this opportunity to inform you that under the will of the late Peter Dannemar, you are sole legatee, owing to a favor which you did him on the streets of this city two years ago. The legacy is considerable, amounting to a million in cash, stocks, and bonds, and we are ready, in compliance with the terms of said will, to turn the whole over to you upon your appearance at our office properly identified. We advise that you secure letters of identification from your banker or postmaster, and present them at the earliest possible moment. Congratulating you upon your good fortune, we are,

"Yours truly,
"Judd & Jerrold, Attys. at Law."

"That sounds good," said Ned, when Jed had finished. "I can't see anything wrong in it, but the magnitude of the thing surprises me."

"It has quite taken my breath," answered Jed Bronson. "If I had rubbed Aladdin's lamp and expressed my best wish I could not be more surprised."

"But there's no banker in Rosedale."

"I'll get the postmaster's O. K.," returned the young heir. "We'll get it without revealing our secret, and if we fail no one will be the wiser."

"That's good policy. There's no use setting the town wild."

There was Jed's adventure in the great city two years before which lent truth to the startling information contained in the letter. While strolling near the park he had seen an elderly man pitch forward to the ground, and he was the first person at his side. The man seemed to have been suddenly overcome and was apparently dead, but Jed raised his head, and while holding it from the ground, called loudly for help. The call was answered by a policeman who rang up an ambulance. The old gentleman regained consciousness as the wagon arrived, and begged to be taken home, but at the same time asked that Jed accompany him.

This the boy could hardly refuse, and in a few minutes he was ushered into a palatial uptown dwelling, which he found to be the old gentleman's abode, and there he learned that he had succored Mr. Peter Dannemar, one of the wealthy men of the district. Mr. Dannemar was very grateful, declaring that he might have died but for Jed's assistance, and insisted upon rewarding him. But Jed declined all such offers, saying that he had only done his duty, and he was dismissed by Mr. Dannemar who said that he would always remember his good deed.

From that eventful day to the reception of the letter from the law firm, Jed had heard nothing of the old gentleman, and, in fact, the incident had passed entirely out of his mind. Now he had been informed that his act was bread cast upon the waters and that from moderate circumstances he was to become a millionaire. It really seemed a dream, as Ned had called it, and he felt like pinching himself to see if he was awake.

The letter had been read and reread. It grew more surprising with each reading, and at last he could no longer doubt its genuineness.

An hour later Jed presented himself to the postmaster at Rosedale and asked that official if he would give him a letter of identification to Judd & Jerrold, of New York.

"What's up now?" queried Amos Grubbs, looking at Jed over his gold-rimmed spectacles. "You're not going to the city to look for a job, be you?"

"Hardly. I'm going on a bit of personal business," answered the youth, concealing his great secret.

"But no one knows Amos Grubbs there."

"They'll know you when they read your letter," smiled Jed.

Thereupon Mr. Grubbs sat down at his desk and wrote a letter which he handed to Jed, saying:

"I hope that will fill the bill, boy. But if you get into trouble, don't blame it upon me."

"I surely will not. I shall stand upon my own responsibility, and if I am not able to take care of myself, I'll shoulder all the blame."

"When are you going to New York?"

"I shall take the morning train, so as to reach the city before dark."

"That's a good idea. There are many rascals in New York laying for country boys, and if you keep your eyes open you may be able to keep Number One in view."

It was an exciting night for Jed Bronson. The letter kept him awake till long after the clock struck twelve, and whenever he awoke, as he did several times before morning, it was to go back to the thought that he was to become a millionaire.

"It looks good to me," he would say to himself. "In the first place, Judd & Jerrold would have known nothing of me if they had not drawn up Peter Dannemar's will. I don't remember having told any one my name during my visit to the city but Mr. Dannemar. Well, I'll go to sleep again and dream the whole thing over."

He did this very thing, but bright and early the following morning he was up, and the first visitor was Ned, who carried a small grip in his hand.

"I've concluded to go along," said Ned. "I want to see this adventure out, it is so strange and startling. I want to ride home with a real millionaire, you see."

"I shall be glad to have you with me, Ned. As for coming home a millionaire, I'll say now that the good fortune won't set me up one bit, but I'll be the same Jed Bronson I've always been."

In less than three hours the two chums were seated in a first-class car, speeding through the country toward New York which was a good two hundred miles away. The hours passed pleasantly on the train, and at last the boys found themselves in the great station with the swarming city about them.

"We'll hunt up Judd & Jerrold in the morning," said Jed before they alighted. "We'll hunt a quiet hotel near the station and quiet our nerves for the adventure."

"That's a good idea," answered Ned. "If Judd & Jerrold don't open their office very early, we can take in some of the town till after lunch, for you know, Jed, I've never seen New York."

They were not long finding a hotel which seemed all right, and when they had registered they were shown to a little room on the third floor.

"It's not a palace," remarked Jed, as his eyes roved around the apartment, "but it will do as well as a room in the Waldorf-Astoria. When I get the legacy, Ned, we'll have a swell time and try the cuisine of that great hotel."

"I've never heard of this hotel," Jed

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resumed later on. "Everything about it looks neat though. Maybe the Hotel Charlotte, while not quite as swell as some others, is just as good."

"It's good enough for two jays," laughed Ned, as he went to the rear window and looked out over the teeming city.

The long ride had somewhat tired the two boys. They resolved to make sure of rest by retiring early, and before the night was far advanced they were snugly ensconced in a good bed and had fallen asleep. The next morning the clerk asked them how they had rested, and they praised the bed, Jed saying that he had been to New York before and had had some experience with hotels.

"I don't see why we should bother Judd & Jerrold too early," he said to his chum. "They might think me too eager to get rich. We will take in the sights and turn up at their office after lunch."

"That suits me, Jed."

It was not long before they set out upon a tour of sightseeing and finally landed in Central Park. They took in everything, and at length sought a quiet spot and took possession of one of the benches.

"We'll look at the letter once more," Jed remarked. "I know it by heart, but——"

The next moment he withdrew his hand from his pocket and uttered a cry. His face was white.

"I've been robbed, Ned!" he exclaimed. "The letter is gone!"

CHAPTER II.

WHO GOT THE LEGACY?

The boys stared blankly at each other. Ned was the first to speak.

"You're sure you've not overlooked it?" cried he.

Without replying Jed went through every pocket. He turned each one wrong side out with a lugubrious countenance.

"It's gone, Ned," said he. "Some one must have got into our room last night."

"But who would know that you had such a letter?"

"I don't accuse any one of knowing," was the reply.

"But nothing but the letter is missing?"

"Both letters are gone, the one from the law firm and the one I obtained from Amos Grubbs."

"It's too bad. We must inform the police."

"But not before we've seen Judd & Jerrold. We'll take a car and go down to the office at once."

The car seemed to run with a snail's speed, but at last it let the boys off at a street corner not far from the office of the law firm, and they lost no time in going up to the office which was on the uppermost floor of a skyscraper. When they opened the door which bore the gilded sign of Judd & Jerrold they came face to face with two keen-faced but pleasant-looking men one of whom was dictating a letter to a stenographer. The girl had a pretty, sympathetic countenance.

"What is it, young sirs?" queried one of the men as Jed approached.

"I am Jed Bronson of Rosedale," answered Jed. "I have come to the city in answer to your letter regarding the legacy left me by Mr. Peter Dannemar."

"What?" cried Phineas Judd, with a start, and then a smile overspread his face. "I was not aware that there are two Jed Bronsons."

"There is but the one, and I am he," Jed replied with emphasis.

"But we have already carried out the terms of Mr. Dannemar's will. We paid the legacy in full this morning."

Jed's heart seemed to land in his throat by a great leap. It appeared to him that the floor was sinking under him.

"You have paid the legacy?" he managed to ejaculate.

"Yes, sir, and in full. Here is the legatee's receipt," and he opened a drawer in his desk and produced a sheet of paper.

"I never signed that!" Jed exclaimed. "I reached the city near dusk yesterday, and concluded to present my identification pape this afternoon. We put up at the Hotel Charlotte, and not wishing to disturb you so early, took in some of the city. When I came to look for the papers in the park, I discovered that they had been stolen."

At this Mr. Jerrold turned in his chair and fixed his gaze upon the boy from Rosedale.

"This is a pretty muddle," said he. "What evidence have you that you are the real Jed Bronson?"

"Ned's statement for one thing, sir. And here is my pocketbook which has my name on the inside," and Jed drew his purse and opened it for inspection.

Mr. Jerrold took it and looked it over. Then he lifted his face to the waiting boy.

"I believe you," said he. "Judd we've been imposed upon."

"No doubt by the person who stole the letters," remarked Judd.

"I cannot say about that, but I'm the real Jed Bronson, as all Rosedale will testify."

"I never saw anything like this for cool villainy," Phineas Judd exclaimed. "Just think of it. We paid the boy who presented our letter and the identification one hundred thousand dollars and the rest of the legacy in gilt-edged stocks and bonds. This is a case for the police."

Jed said nothing. He could not find his tongue as the horror of the situation dawned upon him. Mr. Judd wheeled around to the telephone, but as he picked up the receiver he looked again at Jed.

"Is it possible that you have been tracked to the city?" he asked.

"I cannot think so, sir. No one knew of my coming but Amos Grubbs and Ned here."

"You did not reveal your errand to any one after reaching the city?"

"Not to a single soul."

"It is the most mysterious thing I ever heard of," was the comment. "They pull off some great schemes of villainy in the city, but this one caps them all."

"Never in all my experience have I seen anything like it," ejaculated Jerrold. "But don't lose hope, Mr. Bronson. We'll do all we can to recover the fortune."

Jed dropped into a chair and almost groaned aloud. At that moment he caught a glimpse of the fair stenographer's face. It was full of sympathy, and he inwardly thanked the girl. He hardly heard Phineas Judd at the telephone for looking at the young miss.

"Hello, Mulberry," said Judd. "Send your best detective to this office at once. Most important and mysterious case. A cool million has disappeared. Never saw anything like it. Send Kyle if he is not engaged. Not engaged, eh? That's good. He can't get here any too soon," and Judd laid down the instrument and turned around.

"That boy who presented the letters doesn't resemble you in the least," said he, addressing Jed. "He was about your size and seemed to have on a hand-me-down suit. We didn't question him, for he had our letter and your identification from your postmaster. Everything seemed regular, we paid the legacy, and he signed up and went away. That's all there was of it. You can't blame us, boy."

"I don't blame you," Jed hastened to say. "I can see, though, how you have been hoodwinked."

"Certainly you can. Kyle will be here in a few minutes, and if he can't solve this rascality it can't be solved."

It was not long before a little man of forty entered the office and quietly took a chair. There was nothing about him to denote keenness, his clothes were plain, and he had a habit of constantly trying to keep the hairs of his blond mustache out of his mouth.

"We've got a puzzler for you, Kyle," said Judd, breaking the silence. "I'll outline the case in a few words, and young Bronson yonder can supply the particulars."

Boston Kyle crossed his legs and prepared to listen. Phineas Judd was quite brief, but he told the story of the mystery so well that when he concluded there was nothing to add. Instead of turning to Jed he addressed himself to Phineas Judd.

"Is it generally known that Mr. Peter Dannemar left his wealth to the boy here?" he asked.

"It is not. We took pains to conceal the disposition of the fortune for the present at least. We intended to give it out to the press soon after it was paid. Miss Orton yonder took the letter by dictation and mailed it herself."

"I did so," said the girl. "I mailed it within an hour after it was prepared."

"You keep a copy of your letters, Mr. Judd?"

"Invariably."

"Where?"

"In my desk."

"Who has access to your correspondence?"

"Miss Orton and ourselves."

At this Miss Ivy Orton turned red and seemed on the eve of speaking, but she remained silent.

"Now, Mr. Judd," resumed the detective, rising, "please give me a detailed description of the boy to whom you paid the legacy, and I shall not bother you longer."

Phineas Judd hastened to comply, and when he concluded Boston Kyle turned to Jed.

"Don't change your quarters till further notice," he said. "Remain at the Hotel Charlotte, though it isn't the best place of the kind in the world. Don't mention your loss to any one about the place," and with this the little sleuth departed, not, however, without bestowing a singular look on Miss Orton, who seemed to incline her head.

Jed and Ned soon afterward left the office, and no sooner had the door closed upon them than Phineas Judd whirled upon the girl.

"There's a leak somewhere!" he accused in harsh, irritated tones. "All rascals have a go-between and——"

The beautiful typist rose to her feet indignant. Her whole frame shook.

"I hope your words are not an insinuation," said she, reddening.

"I do not say so, but you surely understand."

"This is infamous!" was the retort. "I have never been suspected of wrongdoing. I have been almost your office slave for four years."

"And a very efficient help," put in Jerrold, in mild tones. "I will willingly certify to that, Miss Orton."

"But I must repeat that there is a leak somewhere, else how came any one to know that the Bronson boy had been informed of his fortune?"

In an instant Ivy strode across the room and halted beside the lawyer whom she looked squarely in the face.

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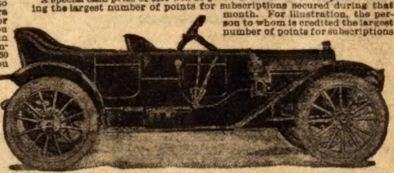

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"I resent your language with all my soul!" she exclaimed, in burning words. "I am as innocent of any wrongdoing in this case as the unborn babe. I have carried out all your orders to the letter, and have kept the secrets of this office. But I shall remain in your employ no longer. Time will vindicate me, Mr. Judd."

"I hope so," cynically replied the lawyer. "But I must maintain that there is a leak somewhere."

Not another word was spoken while Miss Orton gathered up her wraps.

"Good-by," she said at the door.

"Good-by and good luck," responded Jerrold, kindly, but Phineas Judd did not speak.

CHAPTER III.

A CROOKED FINGER.

For once the theft of a million was kept out of the newspapers, although it would have been a sensation which any of the great city journals would have paid well for. Jed Bronson did not grieve much over the loss, for he regarded the unexpected legacy as a bird in the bush, and, in fact, he had lost something he never possessed. However, he was much chagrined, and, then, the mystery of the loss of the two letters was deep enough to center his mind upon it.

The boys returned to the Hotel Charlotte in no enviable frame of mind. They resolved to take Detective Kyle's advice and not mention their misfortune to any one.

"It cannot be," said Jed, "that the thief, whoever he is, entered by the door, for I carefully locked it and shot the bolt. We will inspect our room and see if we can trace the trail of the rascal."

They were in the act of doing so, when a rap sounded on the door, and upon opening it Jed found himself face to face with a small man whom he did not recognize.

"I thought I would look in and take a squint at the premises," began their visitor, in a voice which sounded singularly familiar, and the next moment they knew the man for Boston Kyle. His disguise was perfect.

"You shall have the field all to yourself," answered Jed. "It is too mysterious for us."

Thereupon they watched the detective as he went about the room, closely examining everything.

"A fine view of roofs and skyscrapers from this back window," he commented, as he halted at the sill and seemed to cast his eye over the scene beyond. "I wonder if it was much of a jump from this sloping roof to the other?"

He raised the sash and lowered himself to the iron roof beyond. He slid downward, but soon came back.

"It wasn't much of a leap," said he, answering the query uppermost in the boys' eyes. "I guess you young fellows have made better jumps around Rosedale, eh?"

"Perhaps we have," said Jed. "Do you think the burglar got in by the window?"

"There's no doubt of it."

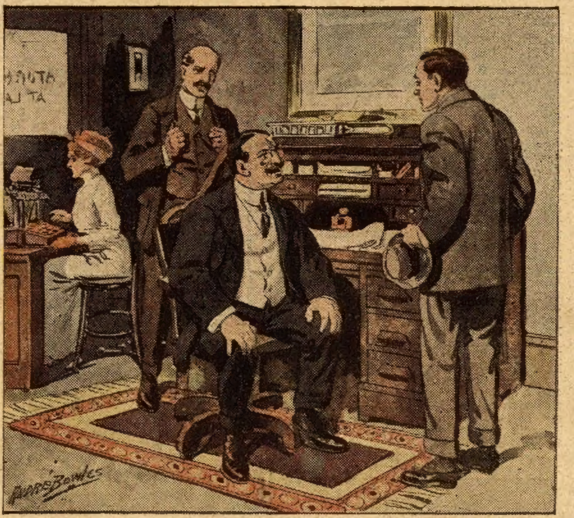
"But how did he know that I had the letters?"

"Maybe he didn't know it," smiled Boston. "Everything is fish that comes to his net. Perhaps when he looked at the letters he made a startling discovery, and suddenly resolved to scrape in a cool million by a very neat play."

"And a very audacious one, I'm thinking."

"They take great chances, these fellows do. I'll see you later, boys."

"I'd like to ask one question," said Jed, as the detective moved toward the door.



"We paid the legacy in full this morning!"

"Well, what is it?" replied Boston, turning quickly on his heel.

"Are Judd and Jerrold honest lawyers?"

"They have a great reputation for that sort o' thing. Indeed, I consider them strictly honest. They have been cleverly imposed upon. There's no doubt that they paid out your legacy, believing that the boy who came with the papers was you yourself. Phineas Judd is hot-headed, but a good lawyer, whilst his partner is fuller of the milk of human kindness than he. I hope you don't suspect the firm?"

"I was leaning a little in that direction," responded Jed, promptly, "but I'll accept your indorsement."

Left to themselves, the boys had to sit down and wait. That evening a man walked up the narrow steps of a certain house in a common quarter of the city and rapped on the door. It was opened by an elderly lady.

"Is Miss Orton at home?" he inquired.

"She's in her room and ill."

"Anything serious?"

"No. She's left her employers for good and——"

"Show me to her room," was the interruption. "I'll go up."

"Come in, sir," said a feminine voice, in answer to the man's knock at a door on the second floor and the stenographer faced her visitor.

"Oh, Mr. Kyle!" she exclaimed, as her pale cheeks flushed a little, "I was quite sure you would come. It is terrible, isn't it?"

"What is, miss?" coolly replied the detective, as he took a chair and crossed his dumpy legs.

"The loss of that boy's legacy. I don't care for my dismissal. I can get another position if I want it, but to have that boy robbed of his fortune bothers me more than I can tell."

"You have really left Judd & Jerrold, then?"

"Yes, I couldn't stand the base insinuations thrown out by Phineas Judd. He declared there was a leak somewhere in the office, and the way he looked at me as he spoke was too much."

Boston, true to his old habit, flicked his mustache out of his mouth and resumed.

"Mr. Judd says that all correspondence is kept in his desk."

"That is quite true."

"Who carries the keys to the desk?"

"No one but Mr. Judd himself."

"You made a copy of the letter which was sent to the Rosedale boy informing him of his windfall?"

"I did. I handed it to Mr. Judd, and he placed it on top of the business file."

"Hum! And locked the desk?"

"I remember now that he did not at the time. He was called away by the telephone, and the business seemed very urgent, as he departed in a great hurry, leaving me in temporary charge of the office."

"Did any one call to see the firm during Mr. Judd's absence?"

"A man came in soon after he went out. I didn't pay much attention to him for I was at my table. When I looked around he was standing close to Mr. Judd's desk, but I thought nothing of that, for it often occurs. Judd & Jerrold have many clients, and some pretty shady ones, if I may say so. Understand, Mr. Kyle, I regard the firm as above suspicion. It is rated high in legal circles."

"Yes, I know, but this man?"

"He inquired for Mr. Judd, and when I told him that he was out he bowed and went away."

"Without leaving his name?"

"He left no name at all."

"What was he like, miss?"

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"He was a slender man of about forty, I should judge, with sandy hair and a smooth face. I noticed nothing very peculiar about him, only I observed that the hand which he rested on the back of Mr. Judd's chair had a crooked finger."

"Hum!" commented Boston, in scarcely audible tones. "He looked genteel, eh?"

"Quite so."

"Now, was the copy of the letter where he might have seen it?" asked the detective.

"He might have seen it if he had looked for it," responded Miss Orton. "Do you associate that strange man with the theft of the million-dollar legacy?"

"I—I can't say that I do, miss."

"Even if he saw the letter, how would he know when the Rosedale boy reached the city and where he was stopping?'

A broad smile illumined Boston Kyle's face.

"I guess there's nothing in the visit," said he. "It's what we call a coincidence."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, for I would not like to think that any of the clients of the firm would stoop to such a terrible deed."

"You're not going back to the office?"

Miss Orton's face crimsoned.

"After what Phineas Judd said to me?" she exclaimed. "Not for a moment, Mr. Kyle."

Boston picked up his hat and departed. Twenty minutes later he appeared at police headquarters and entered the Rogues' Gallery.

"Album number twenty-one," said he to the official in charge.

"What's up now?" said that person, as he produced the ponderous volume which contained hundreds of photographs of noted crooks and evildoers of all kinds.

"Just refreshing my memory, that's all," was the reply, and Boston was left to himself.

He turned the heavy leaves for a few minutes and then suddenly paused.

"The record stands," he said to himself, as his index finger rested beneath one of the photographs. "Oyster Jim is still dead, killed during a raid in Hackensack and carried off by his pal. Had a crooked finger, sandy hair, and was slim." Boston dallied thoughtfully with his mustache. "The girl's description tallies with the one here, but hang it all, Oyster Jim is dead! Hum!" He closed the book. "I'm sorry for the boy. He's lost a cool million by one of the cleverest substitutions I ever heard of. The girl is straight, so are Judd & Jerrold. I say, Boston, this is the case of your life. Either the crook who burglarized the room in the Hotel Charlotte made an unexpected discovery, or got a clew in that law office, or both. Hum! Judd said the boy who got the legacy didn't resemble Jed Bronson. He didn't have to if he had the documents. Find the boy and get results, but find a needle in a haystack! Mebbe you're up against it, Mr. Kyle. But all the same I'm going to find that stolen million or resign my job!"

And the next instant Boston went whistling from the place, and, lighting a cigar on the lower step, strolled briskly away.

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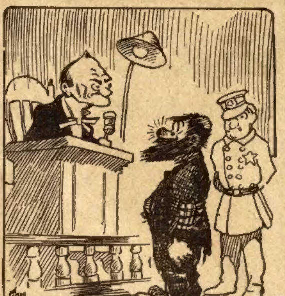
"Discussing this young lady and a Chicago millionaire, a girl remarked:

" 'She says he's not a very good catch, after all.'

"Another girl, tossing her head, then made the comment:

" 'She says that, does she? Then he must have dropped her.' "

* * *



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The Vag—I do whenever I get de chanst. I blow de foam off 'em.

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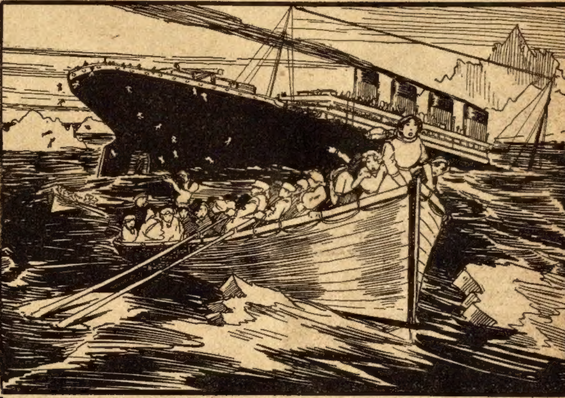

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The whole world mourns the heroes who met their death like men that the women and children might be saved.

What the Survivors Told

to the special investigators of the publishers of this book throws a new light on the horror of it.

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The book is profusely illustrated with actual photographs and sketches by artists and eye witnesses of the wreck. These photographs start in and show the construction and launching of this monster of the sea; it shows it while building and afterwards when it proudly strode the sea.

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This memorial edition of The Sinking of the Titanic is a book you should have. It will be interesting to you and to your visitors and should be on your library table. It is bound in Full Cloth, 287 pages, 6½ by 9 inches, beautifully Stamped in Gold and Black, printed on rich cream-white book paper and full of photographs of all the important personages and scenes of this appalling disaster and the incidents connected with it. By special arrangement with the publishers we have secured this book for the readers of the Blade and Ledger.

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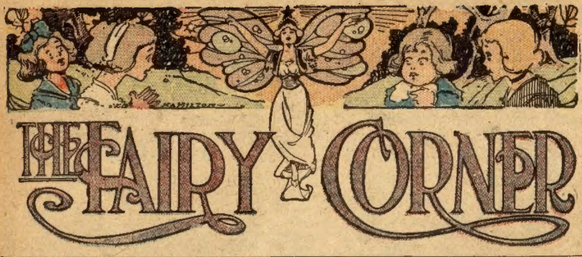


THE FAIRY CORNER

PEPPERMINT DROPS.

First of milk and water
  Take a half a cup;
Pour on two cups of sugar,
  Which will soak them up;
A pinch of cream of tartar—
  Put all on to boil,
Slowly, seven minutes—
  No more, lest it spoil.
Next, lift off your saucepan;
  In the mixture pour
A little oil of peppermint,
  Three drops, perhaps, or four;
Stir with steady motion
  Until it's thick as cream;
Then drop it on waxed paper.
  'Twill harden like a dream.

❧

In the Lane.

In Apple-bough lane, sunshine and shadow were mingled. When the warm radiance of noon hour bathed it the birds sang and the weeds rustled musically and the sky above went forever tumbling, as if a kindly tempest were at play among the cloud-billows. At this hour squirrels played good naturedly by the hedge and went rollicking in the wild blooms with which the lane was carpeted in summer. But as the night came on, or when soft rain pattered among the dead leaves, Apple-bough lane was the most dismal place that you could imagine.

It was strange that no one had ever stumbled upon Jess and Miss Van Tinsel during those heavy summer afternoons. They lay side by side in the weeds, quite covered from view. They had been there so long, through good weather and stormy, that Miss Van Tinsel's fine clothes were worn to a bedraggled ruin, while poor Jess was as naked as when she first came into the world. Away back in a previous summer two little girls had played in the lane together, a rich little girl and a poor one. Somehow, because of a storm or the dreams or the laughter, two dolls were left amid the weeds of the lane, a prim young thing in finery and a china doll without possible pedigree.

Even a year of companionship, as they lay deep buried under the leaves and the changing skies, had not brought friendship. Miss Van Tinsel was proud and haughty and overbearing, so much so that Jess had long since lapsed into silence, from which only the songs of spring could arouse her, when birds tilted on the apple boughs at the side of the lane.

"Some day people will find us here, forgotten and alone," declared Miss Van Tinsel, repeating a sentence that had grown to be an almost daily declaration with her. "Then pedigree will tell—and family and wealth. They will recognize that you are of a common sort and leave you here, but I shall be taken back to the lap of luxury once more. You shall see."

Jess never replied. She just drew the sheltering weeds about her poor little china body and thought of the proverty of winter when the apple blossoms and the birds were not there.

It often chances that even the unassuming and good are sorely tried. Jess was severely reminded of this on an afternoon not long afterwards. A little girl dressed in the height of fashion came romping down the lane. She had been away to school and was changed, but Jess and Miss Van Tinsel recognized her. It was the rich little girl. Quite by accident she trod upon Miss Van Tinsel and picked her up.

"Now is my time—I told you so!" said the doll triumphantly as she was lifted out of the weeds and carried down the lane a short distance.

Unfortunately, Miss Van Tinsel was to be treated to a rather unpleasant surprise.

"My old doll!" ejaculated the rich little girl in astonishment, as she held the poor, faded creature out at arm's length in her neatly gloved hand. "Ugh, but she's nasty and wet and quite ruined. I should not like her now."

Having said this, she tossed poor Miss Van Tinsel back into the weeds again and hurried away up the lane.

That same afternoon another little girl came into the lane. She had been absent too. Illness had taken the roses from her cheeks, and she was thin from long suffering. She picked blossoms from the tangle of undergrowth in the lane and bathed her wan face in the bright petals that were showered from the apple boughs.

Miss Van Tinsel was watching, her tears will wet upon her round cheeks. She saw the child bend over something in the weeds directly at her feet and then snatch it to her breast as if it were the greatest treasure in all the world.

"My dolly—my poor—poor lost Jessy!" she cried joyfully. "I have found you at last. You shall come home and I will give you a new dress and love you—SO much!" Then Miss Van Tinsel, as she crouched forgotten and alone in the wet leaves, saw the china doll borne in loving arms down a path of fallen apple blossoms.

❧

It Didn't Hurt Pat.

A countryman was carrying a live turtle along the street of a city with a view of selling it to some chance passer-by. Along came Pat with a fine big dog.

"A fine turtle you have there," said Pat, pausing to engage the countryman in friendly conversation.

"Yep, an' if you want to know jest how fine he is put your finger in his mouth," replied the countryman, grinning. He hoped to give Pat a test of the turtle's strength.

Pat was thoughtful for a moment, and the countryman urged. "Jest stick yer finger in his mouth. 'Twon't hurt you, on me honor."

"I'll put me dog's tail in his mouth," said Pat as a clever thought came to him. Then he took hold of the dog's tail and stuck the end of it into the turtle's mouth. Instantly the turtle shut down on Mr. Dog's tail and the animal started to run homeward as fast as ever he could go, howling the while.

"Fer the love o' heaven, call back your dog!" cried the countryman, fearing lest he lose his turtle.

"Call back your turtle," said Pat calmly, turning on his heel.

❧

What the Dog Lost.

If you have a dog or are intimately acquainted with somebody else's dog you will know why a fox terrier that lived in Oroville, Cal., was forced to undergo an operation for appendicitis. When you know a dog pretty well you usually come to believe that he is a pretty good fellow. "The more I see of men, the better I like dogs," said a prominent cynic, and this will do as a compliment for dogs, though it was not meant that way. But, anyhow, the dog in California lived in a railroad office, and the railroad men were all his friends. When he became ill they sent for the doctor, and the doctor said that it was appendicitis and that an operation was necessary. The trainmen took up a subscription, and they hired the best doctor they could find in Oroville, and Spot had his fashionable operation for appendicitis, which made him proud, despite the pain of it.

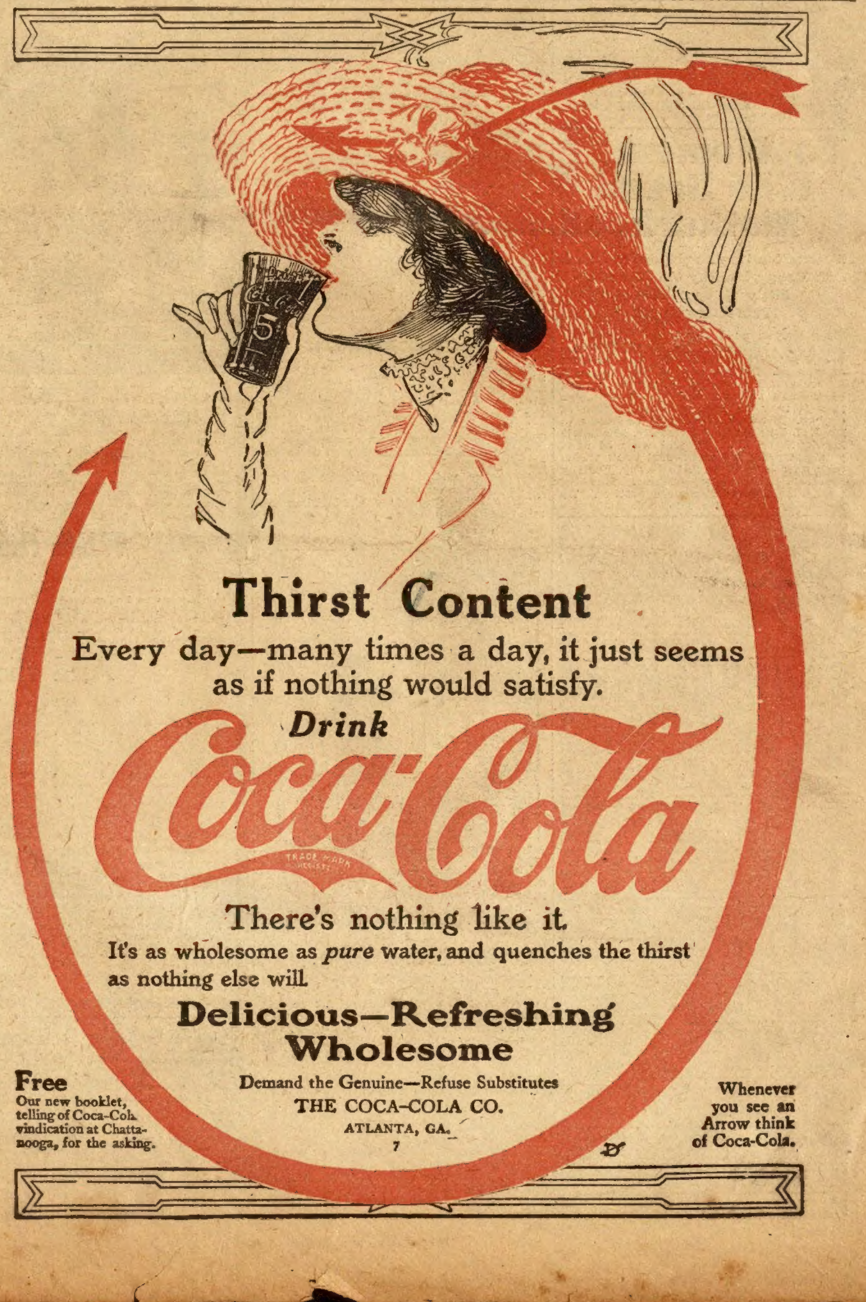
❧

Fire Fighting.

Children and most grown folk like to go to fires and watch the buildings burn, but the firemen have to work when they go to fires. Therefore it must have seemed like a vacation for the firemen of North Braddock, Pa., when they had a chance to look on without working. They tried hard enough to work when they heard that Mrs. Baldridge's house, away out at the edge of town, was burning. They came with all the hose-carts and things they possessed and they laid hose from the nearest water plug and turned on the water. The stream came within two feet of reaching the house, but there was no more hose, and all the water in the world will not put out a fire if it does not touch the fire. So the firemen sat down and watched the house burn.

❧

Every time a circus visits town we have a lot of fresh evidence that men are but grown-up boys.



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